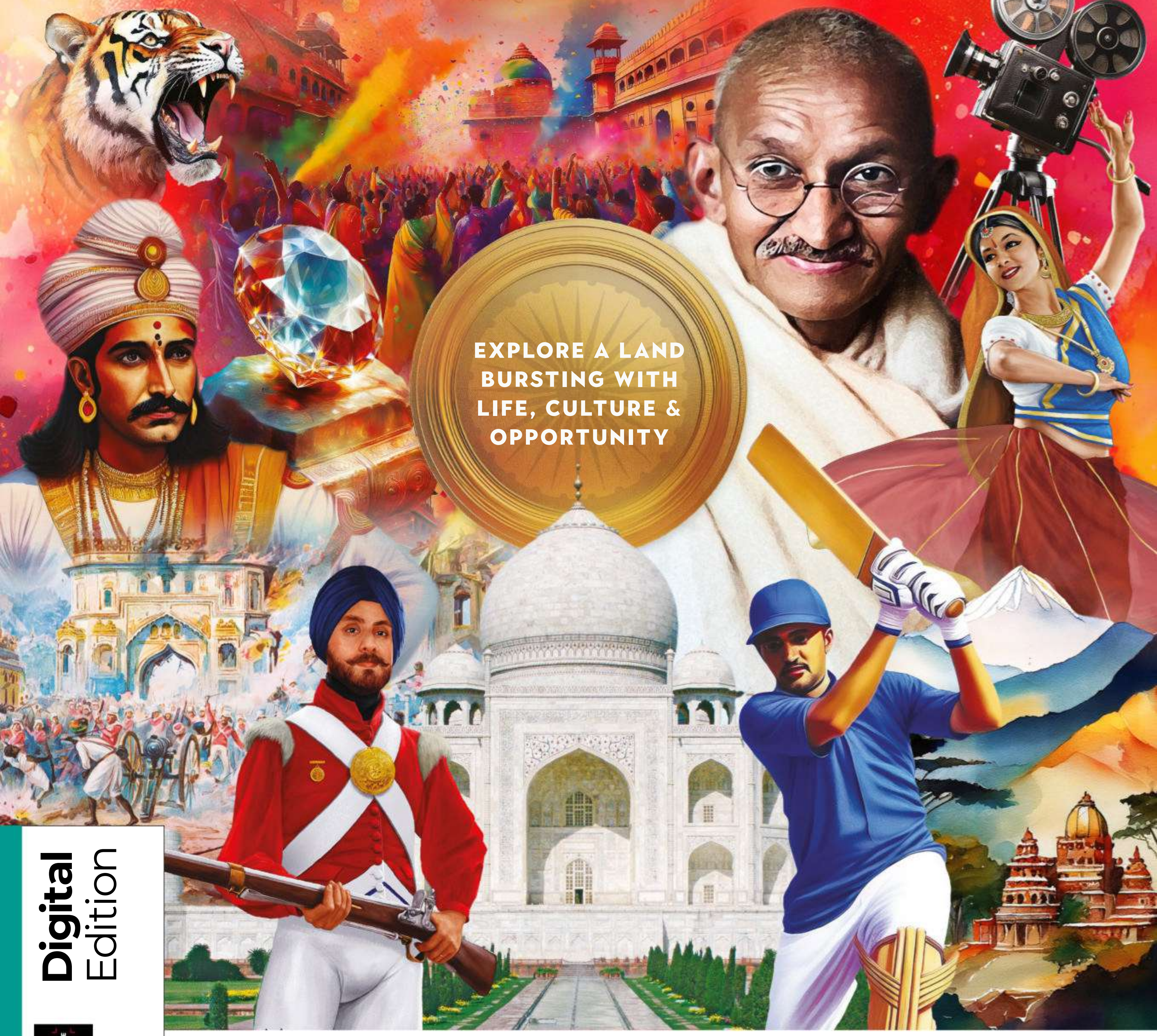
NEW

FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY

HISTORY OF INDIA



EXPLORE A LAND BURSTING WITH LIFE, CULTURE & OPPORTUNITY

Digital Edition

FUTURE

FIRST EDITION

EMPIRES • GANDHI • BOLLYWOOD • FAITH & FESTIVALS

India is a world in one country, a nation home to more people than any other on Earth, millions of whom follow different faiths and hail from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is a mesmerising, colourful, chaotic place brimming with life and blessed with wonders both natural and man-made. Its roots reach all the way back to 3,300 BCE, and its future promises to unlock the vast potential of its young populace. But how did the India we know today come to be? Who were the rulers and conquerors that shaped it? What is the story behind landmarks such as the majestic Taj Mahal? And what is life like for the 1.4 billion souls inside its sprawling borders? Prepare to embark on a journey through a fascinating land described as "the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history".

HISTORY OF INDIA

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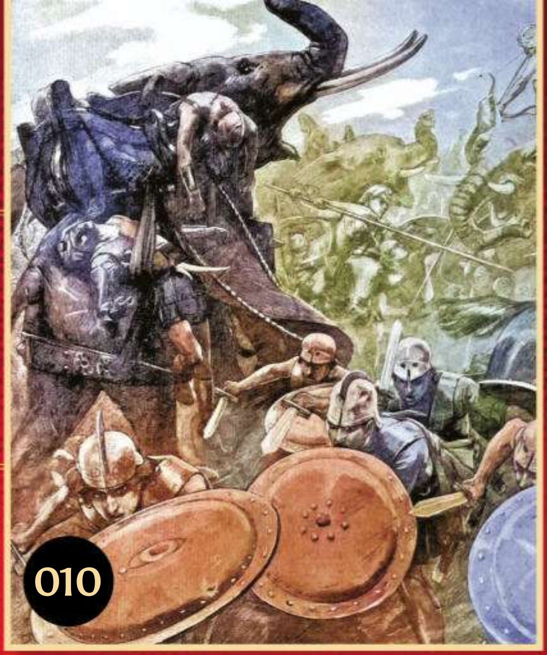

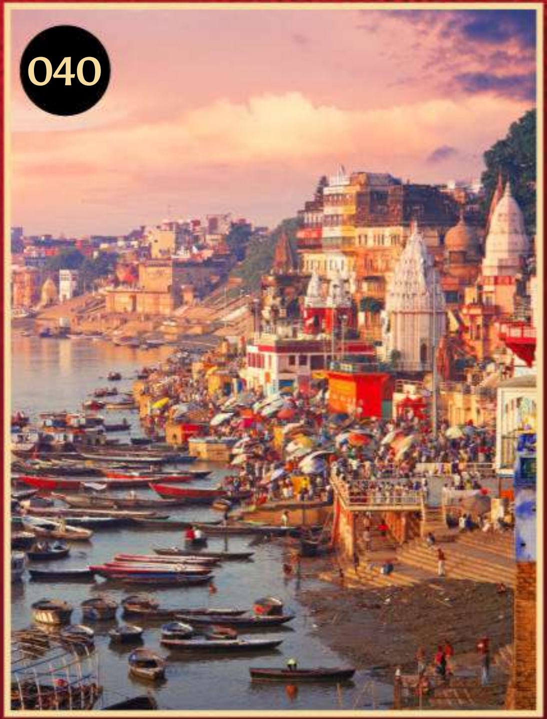

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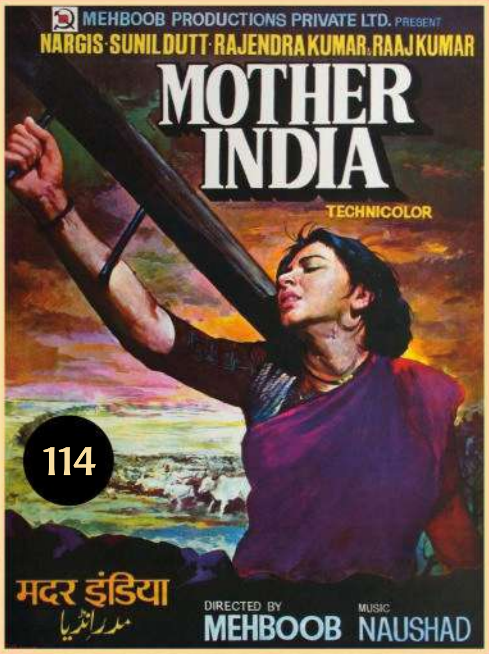
> “A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people”
> - Mahatma Gandhi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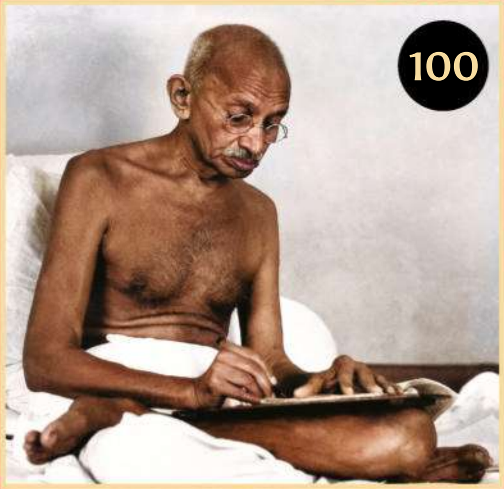

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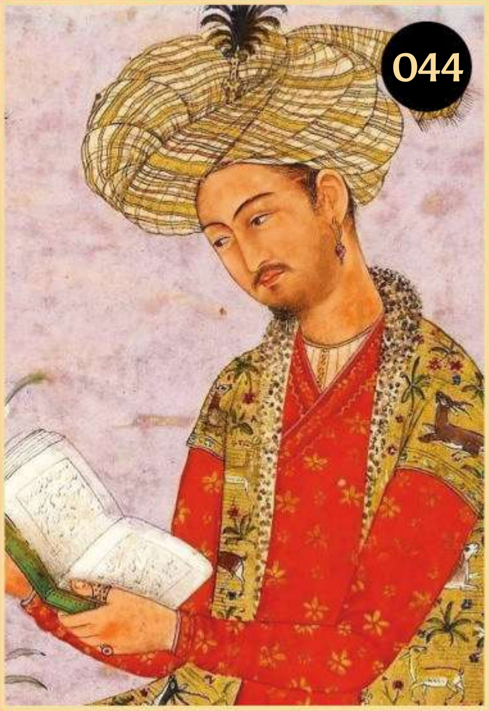

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The 'dancing girl' is a rare example of an Indus bronze statue. It depicts a confident young lady enjoying her youth

Indus Valley cities were laid out in a grid stretching from long thoroughfares

THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

Cloaked in mystery, the Old World's largest civilisation pioneered grid urban planning and sewage systems, only to disappear completely for thousands of years, still waiting to be understood

Written by Hareth Al Bustani

In 1826, a British East India Company explorer discovered an ancient city, hitherto known only to the locals, and assumed to be around 1,500 years old. However, within 50 years, the ruins had been stripped of their fired bricks, which rail engineers had quarried for ballast. In the ensuing decades archaeologists began to piece together the puzzle, unearthing a lost civilisation far larger and older in scope than previously imagined. The city robbed of its bricks was Harappa, the powerful capital of the Old World's largest civilisation, the Indus Valley.

The vast civilisation began with the humblest of roots in around 3300 BCE, when villages sprouted along the flood plains of the parallel Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra rivers. Drawing upon the region's spectacularly rich hunting and fishing grounds, the Indus soon began to amass high yields of wheat, barley and cotton, building granaries to store their sizable surplus. While previous cultures traded with Iran, Afghanistan and even Turkmenistan, the Indus Valley Civilisation established the first overseas trade route, across the Arabian Sea – helping its major urban centres amass power and wealth. At its peak, the civilisation stretched across more than 500,000 square miles, with 1,500 settlements clustered throughout northwest India, most of Pakistan and into Afghanistan.

> While the civilisation had a writing system, it remains a mystery as all attempts to decipher it have failed.

By 2600, the Valley's larger settlements came to resemble state-level societies, with smaller outlying settlements resembling chiefdoms. While the vast majority of its residents lived in small peripheral villages, the most powerful cities existed as autonomous city-states. Though surrounded by enormous mud-brick and stone walls, conflict seemed to play, at most, a very minor role in Indus Valley culture, with few arrowheads or spears discovered among the ruins in the region. On the contrary, influence seems to have been exuded through the force of culture, as homogenised systems of urban planning, economy and society reverberated across a region that was twice the size of its counterparts in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt.

The two largest settlements, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, were enormous, housing up to 50,000 inhabitants each. Due to Harappa's apparent pre-eminence, the Indus Valley Civilisation is often referred to as the Harappan Civilisation. Such cities boasted shared principles of urban planning, with a citadel of large public buildings, built atop a mound to the west, accompanied by a lower residential town to the east. Indus cities were built in a grid, forming parallelograms, with long thoroughfares running north to south and east to west – an urban-planning first. Uniformity was widespread across Indus settlements, even down to brick sizes.

Streets were designed in accordance with wind direction, guiding a breeze through the city and ventilating fresh air into homes. Public drains ran through the middle of wide roads, complete with manholes to collect and remove waste. Built around central courtyards and complete with living rooms, private mud houses also featured elaborate indoor bathing and toilet facilities lined with ceramic tiles. Connecting to the public drains, their plumbing systems were not only advanced compared to their contemporaries but in many cases superior to those found in Indian and Pakistani homes today.

Municipalities also offered public restrooms, with Harappa and Mohenjo-daro both housing large public baths many centuries before the Romans, their central locations indicating a fixation on cleanliness beyond simple hygiene. This implies that ritual purity might have played a crucial role

> “While villagers lived simple lives, cities were vibrant centres of culture, trade and industry”

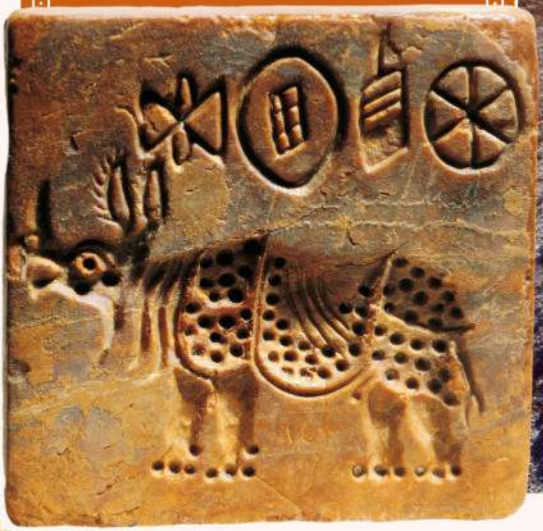
THE SECRET SCRIPT

Still undeciphered, the Indus script may just be the key to unlocking the civilisation’s greatest secrets

The Indus Valley Civilisation developed an intricate writing script, depicting hundreds of logographic visual symbols: dots, lines, geometric shapes, humans and animal forms. There seem to have been between 300 and 700 symbols, half of which were basic, with many compounds – indicating that it may have been a logosyllabic script, where each symbol represents a syllable rather than a single letter. Written from right to left, in rows from the top down, the endemic script adorned seals and trade goods, perhaps conveying ownership information, a protective invocation, or a dedication. It was also imposed on wooden signage, either for administrative purposes, to identify houses or to bless travellers.

Across the Indus Valley, it appears that the rules of language, sentence structure and grammar were homogenous. Though various attempts have been made to decipher it, in the absence of a figurative Rosetta Stone, none have succeeded. Compounding the problem, most incidences of the script are only eight symbols long, with the longest just 17. Another difficulty is in trying to infer pictorial meaning; where one scholar sees a snake, another sees a seated man. The disappearance of the language is perhaps even more bewildering than that of its parent civilisation, and should the code ever be cracked, would unshroud many a mystery.

This Indus Valley seal is adorned with indecipherable symbols written from right to left



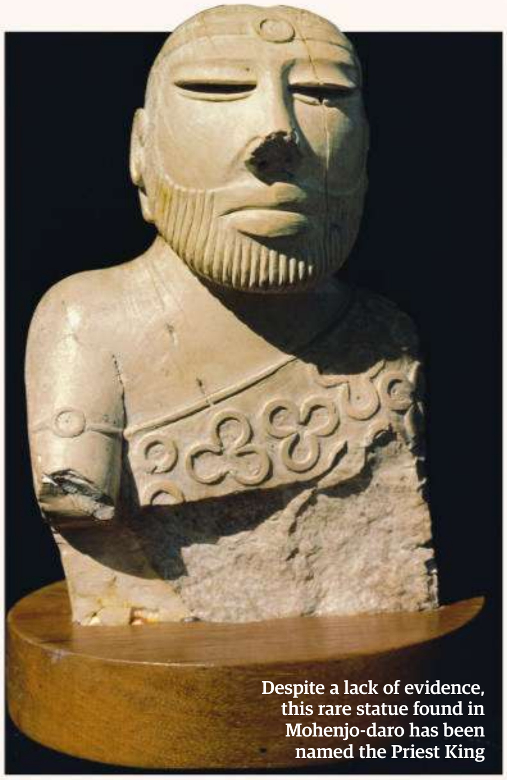
in the Harappan psyche, with dirt and impurity considered to be unholy – a precursor to later Hindu traditions.

Power appears to have been decentralised in the cities, shared among various groups of occupational elites ranging from merchants and ritualists to those in control of land and livestock. However, uniformity across residential and burial areas indicates that, whether one was a priest, warrior, peasant, trader or artisan, there was a higher fluidity of social status that would later become synonymous with the varna (caste) system. Most Indus were given the same funerary rites – placed in a coffin or wrapped in a shroud and buried atop grave furniture; pottery, jewellery, ornaments and personal artefacts, such as copper mirrors or mother-of-pearl shells. Although these objects certainly seem to demonstrate a belief in the afterlife, the Harappans’ relatively small cemeteries indicate that not everyone was buried; others may have been cremated.

While villagers lived relatively simple lives, herding animals and growing crops, major cities were vibrant centres of culture, trade and industry. Artisans were masters of metalwork, lapidary and ceramics, producing ornaments and tools to use and export to distant lands. Metalsmiths worked with both copper and bronze, creating casts by pouring molten metal into moulds, and adding tin or arsenic to remove bubbles. In this way they crafted everything from arrowheads and axes to harpoons and small bottles. They also manufactured textiles using their natural abundance of high-quality cotton.

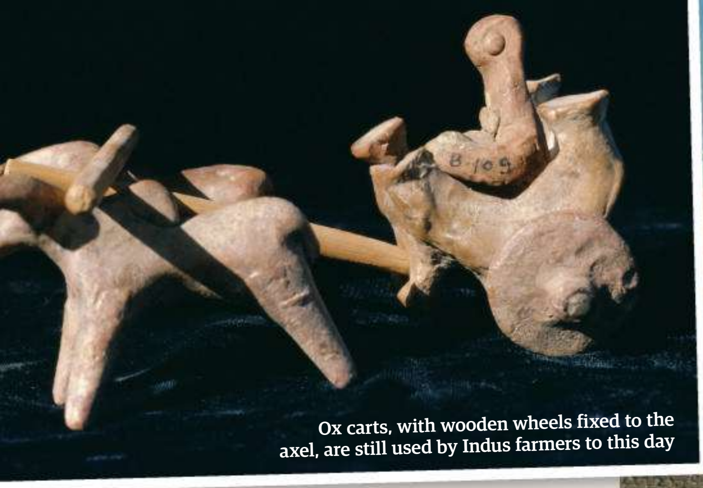
Meanwhile, potters mass-produced wares in circular kilns, with a stokehole and furnace placed beneath a perforated floor, covered by a dome ceiling. These were primarily designed with function in mind, with potters producing goblets, cups, pans and many other utilitarian objects using a base of pinkish river clay. They made use of efflorescence, a process that ensures the interior core and glaze are exactly the same colour, while bonding the glaze to the body. Decorated pottery featured bright-red backgrounds, with black designs painted atop – depicting both geometric and naturalistic imagery, such as a fisherman carrying his nets and pole, with a fish and turtle by his feet.

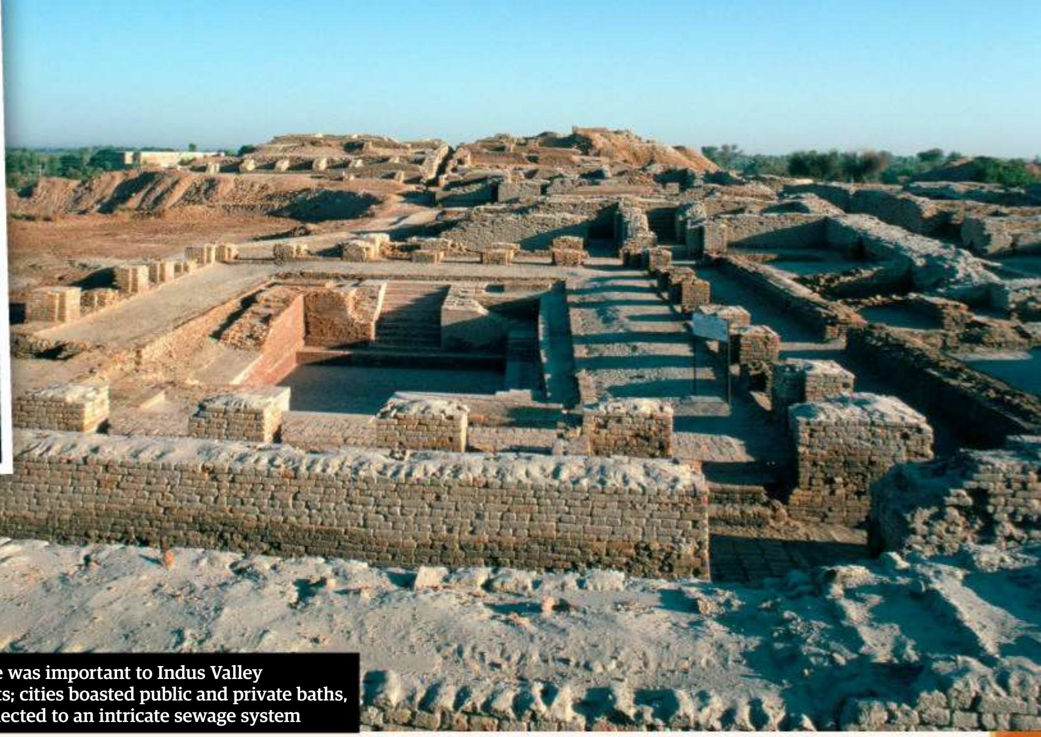
While early Indus settlers made beads from seashells, now they had become increasingly resourceful, crafting beads from gemstones and even gold. Artisans also produced a unique, compact, glassy faience in an assortment of colours.



Despite a lack of evidence, this rare statue found in Mohenjo-daro has been named the Priest King

The Indus Valley’s abundance of wheat and barley was a major step in its rapid development, leading to the construction of granaries and grindstones


Ox carts, with wooden wheels fixed to the axel, are still used by Indus farmers to this day


Hygiene was important to Indus Valley residents; cities boasted public and private baths, all connected to an intricate sewage system

They forged tools, jewellery and dice from ivory, and tanned animal hides for leather for both clothing and sails.

Though the Indus did not produce much fine art, among a series of limestone statues found at Mohenjo-daro is a particularly curious piece. Just over 17 centimetres (seven inches) high, it depicts a bearded man wearing a robe with one shoulder exposed – a man some have speculated was a Priest King. Bronze statues were even rarer, most notably the renowned 'dancing girl', portraying a woman wearing only bangles on her arm and a necklace, in the throes of dance. It is particularly remarkable, not just in its form, but for its embrace of dance and sensuality.

Across the Indus Valley, settlements traded in standardised weights – many found as far as Oman and Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamians also imported onions, cotton, hardwoods, pearls, carnelian, peacocks and monkeys, in return exporting raw materials, copper, gold, woollen items and perfumes to the Indus Valley. While Indus Valley traders lived in Mesopotamia, Mesopotamians did not settle the other way, suggesting a somewhat closed-off society. Archaeologists have also uncovered hundreds of small soapstone seals used to stamp designs and inscriptions into soft clay – most likely used by merchants in the same manner of a signet ring. The most widespread iconography is that of a unicorn, resembling a cross between a humpless bull and an antelope, with long legs and exaggerated genitals. Another depicts what may be a male deity, often referred to as Shiva Pashupati, lord of the beasts. Wearing a headdress of buffalo horns with a pipal tree growing from it – the same tree Buddha was said to have achieved enlightenment under – he sits in the lotus position, symbolising meditation and introspection, sometimes appearing with three faces, surrounded by animals, forming a mandala. Other seals feature bulls, baboons, elephants, rhinos, tigers and other animals that were native to the region, often depicted as males.

Terracotta figurines seem to depict a mother goddess with exaggerated features of femininity

Terracotta figurines, meanwhile, depict women, with special attention drawn to their prominent hips, thighs, breasts and showy hairstyles. They seem to symbolise the worship of a mother goddess, and they may have been used ritualistically in conjunction with an animist spiritual view. Cattle bones found at the fire altars of Kalibangan and Rakhigarhi indicate that perhaps these were offered in sacrifice. With a lack of temples, religious ceremonies were most likely conducted in the open, with decentralised worship practised at home. It is also possible that while the mass of culture was homogenised in the larger cities, even the distant rural Indus may have played a significant role in tweaking their culture and traditions.

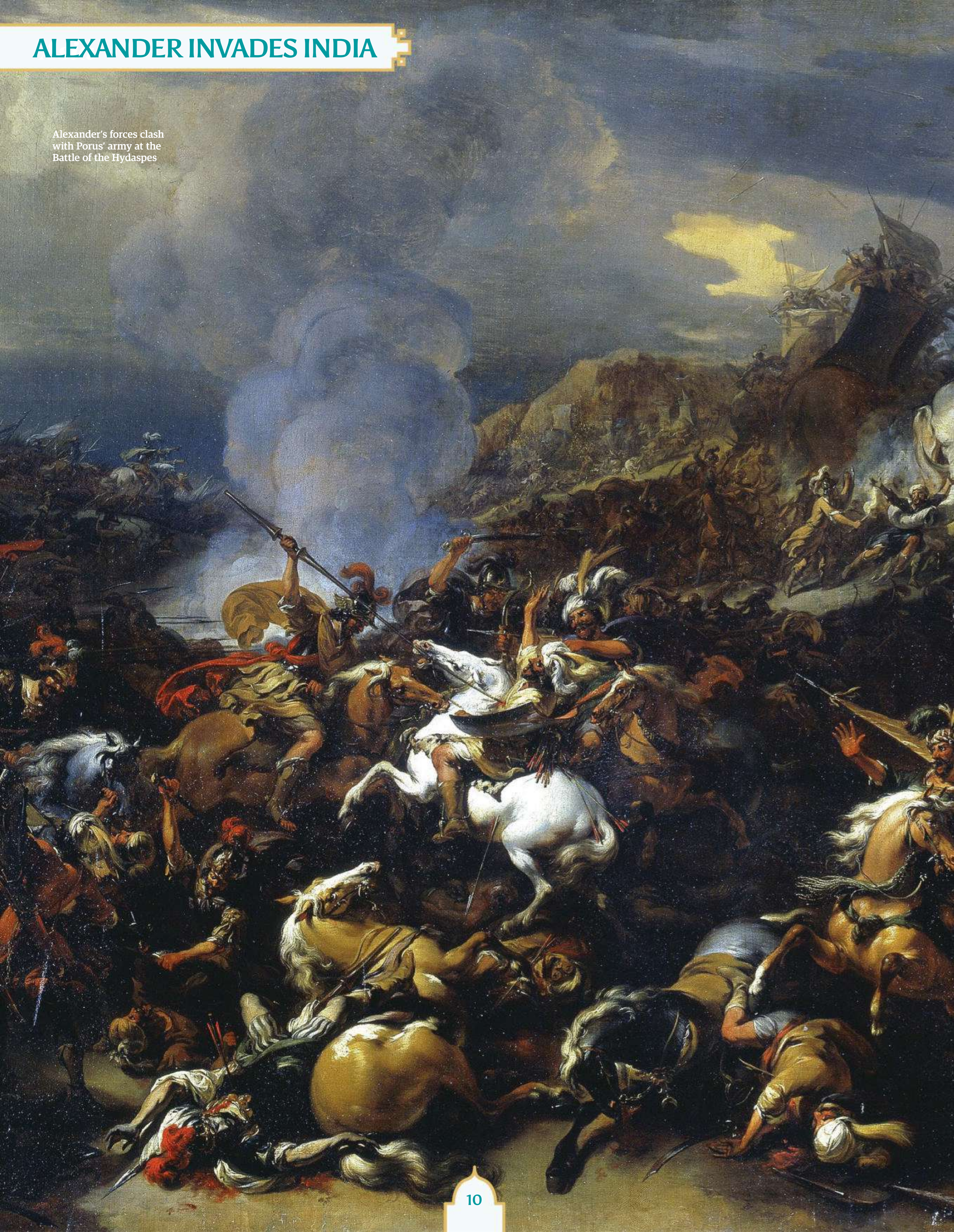
The Indus Valley Civilisation began to experience a rapid decline from 1900 BCE, with settlements becoming increasingly isolated from one another, forced to rely on their own resources and local trade networks. Uniformity slipped away from town planning, craftsmanship and virtually all other aspects of life. As the civilisation went into freefall, drains fell into disrepair, houses were built of inferior quality using salvaged bricks, and heavy industry splintered off into little workshops. In Mohenjo-daro, as the living took to burying their valuables, the dead were given unceremonious send-offs in derelict houses and streets.

Over the next 500 years, the settlements withered and disappeared, with a gradual exodus to new settlements in nearby Gujarat, the Kachi Plain and east Punjab. Here, despite slipping into obscurity, Indus Valley bead making, metallurgy, ceramic production, glazed faience and architecture were all kept alive.

After a long hiatus, traditional traders have re-embraced the Harappan standardised use of weights, and Indus farmers still use the same wooden-wheeled ox carts. However, with the Indus writing system still undeciphered, the civilisation's true cultural legacy remains shrouded in mystery, patiently waiting to be discovered.

Artisans crafted a variety of beads, from seashells and gemstones to an innovative form of glassy faience

After a long day's work in the fields or at the kiln, Harappans enjoyed playing board games



Alexander's forces clash with Porus' army at the Battle of the Hydaspes

ALEXANDER INVADES INDIA

Having brought the mighty Persian Empire to its knees through a string of stunning victories, in 326 BCE Alexander the Great turned his gaze east to the jungles of India and the edge of the world he longed to see

Written by Nick McCarty & Charles Ginger

Alexander had accomplished the impossible. Persia, the greatest empire the ancient world have ever known, a foe once deemed unbeatable, now answered to a new master, a son of Macedon who, by 326 BCE, held sway from Greece to Asia. He founded cities in Egypt and Afghanistan and spread the influence of his homeland far and wide. Some men may have found their thirst for conquest satiated by such unparalleled gains, but Alexander was without equal both in martial ability and imperial ambition. With the forces of Persia brought to heel he was now free to march into the mystical lands of the East. It would be a difficult and bloody campaign, one marked by soaring victories, more than one brush with death and, ultimately, a crushing personal disappointment for a man rightly regarded as the finest commander of the ancient world.

THE COPHEN CAMPAIGN

Before Alexander's forces could march into India it was imperative that they secured their lines of communication. To do so, the tribes of the Kabul Valley and beyond had to be subjugated. Many were only too willing to accept Alexander's terms and acknowledge him as their new overlord, sending ambassadors to pay tribute - on one occasion in the form of 25 elephants. Others, including many states in India, refused to acquiesce, however. If Alexander was going to enforce his rule, he was going to have to do so at the end of a sword. But the struggles ahead would be far greater than he had dared imagine.

During his first serious engagement with the natives Alexander was wounded in the shoulder by a dart. The battle continued, and the next day the Macedonians broke through the earthworks, slaughtered the fighting men and butchered all prisoners out of revenge. The town was then razed to the ground.

As a result of this butchery many other towns on the Macedonian army's route towards the Indus surrendered without fighting. Ptolemy, a general who served in Alexander's private bodyguard, and his troops now joined Alexander. When the army came out of the mountains and down to a settlement called Arigaeum, Alexander found it had been burnt by the inhabitants and was completely abandoned. It was here that Craterus, another prominent commander, rejoined Alexander's army.

Alexander decided that this city stood at a good strategic site and ordered Craterus to fortify it and settle it with any of the natives who were willing to return. He also settled those of his men who were no longer fit for service. They provided the foundations of a garrison town that would protect his lines of communication.

He moved on from there, setting up pockets of his soldiers in blockhouses along their route to deny the natives free access to the land and to protect his line of retreat if necessary. At this time a number of cities were being besieged and their rulers came to him asking for terms. They were astonished to find Alexander in his tent, still dirty and unkempt from the battlefield. A cushion was brought for him, and he took it and gave it to the most senior of the supplicants, Acouphis, and asked him to be seated. Acouphis was very impressed by this courtesy and asked Alexander what he wanted the people to do to earn his friendship. "They must appoint you as their governor and send me 100 of their best men for hostages," said Alexander. Acouphis laughed and replied, "I shall govern them better, my lord, if you would take the worst instead of the best."

It was at about this time that Alexander performed another astounding military feat.

THE ROCK OF AORNOS

When writing about the obstacle that lay ahead of Alexander, the Greek historian Arrian was clear about the scale of the task: "There was a report that even Hercules, though the son of Zeus, was not able to take the fortress on this rock. Whether the Theban or the Tyrian or the Egyptian Heracles did, in fact, go to India I cannot affirm as true. I am inclined to believe the contrary, because, whatever is difficult to be accomplished, men, to raise the difficulty still the higher, have reported that Hercules attempted it in vain."

Whatever the truth of the legend, Alexander had a problem. The Indians in and around the town of Bazira had fled to the Rock of Aornos, which was in fact a ridge commanding the Indus River about 121 kilometres (75 miles) north of Attock.

© Getty Images, Wikipedia

The rock stood 2,134 metres (7,000 feet) high, was about 40 kilometres (25 miles) in circumference and had only one rock-hewn track to the top. There was plenty of water, woodland and arable land for supplies for the population of Bazira and its surrounding countryside to survive for months. Even so, Alexander had not carved out a colossal empire by backing down from a fight, and he resolved to lay siege to the rock.

While he set about cutting it off with the help of Craterus and Ptolemy, Alexander sent Hephaestion, a nobleman serving in the Macedonian army, down to the Indus with instructions to build a bridge across it. Alexander then travelled to nearby Embolima and ordered Craterus to lay in all necessary supplies for a long siege in case they could not take the rock by assault. He moved to reconnoitre the stronghold with a force of the best-armed and fittest infantrymen, 200 mounted archers and 200 companions of the bodyguard.

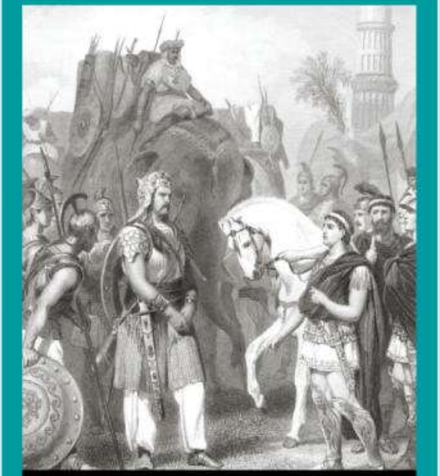
PORUS THE KING

Porus was a big man. Some say he was as much as six feet, three inches tall (1.9 metres) and powerfully built. It is said that when he was mounted on a fighting elephant he looked as an ordinary man would when seated on a horse. His elephant was very large and seemed to understand that while his master was fighting it should defend him as well as it could. Legend has it that when it realised that Porus was shattered by wounds at Battle of the Hydaspes, "It knelt quietly for fear Porus might fall off. With its trunk it took hold of each spear and drew it out of his body."

Even in defeat Porus was a man of great dignity. When Alexander asked him how he wished to be treated, Porus answered, "As a king." Alexander replied, "I would do that for my own sake. What can I do for yours?"

"My first request compasses all my wishes," said Porus.

Such was his admiration for his beaten foe, Alexander not only returned his kingdom to him but also gave him land and villages from the peoples he had already defeated.



Alexander meets King Porus after defeating him in battle. It was at this time that Bucephalus, his cherished horse, died

It was now that Alexander enjoyed yet another stroke of good luck when some local natives surrendered to him and told him they would take him to the most vulnerable part of the rock on the other side of the cliff that faced them.

In order to take the mountain fortress, Alexander decided that Ptolemy should attack from one side and his force from the other. Ptolemy had to advance up narrow and dangerous tracks but was to wait for Alexander's men to get into position before attacking. To achieve this Alexander had to create a bridge across a deep ravine strong enough to take men and siege engines.

Alexander harboured dreams of invading Arabia, but his premature death spared the region.

At first the Indian defenders on top of the rock jeered when they saw the army below them making wattle rafts that they threw into the ravine. These they piled up with earth and stones. On top of this they laid more wattle rafts to hold the pile together and piled up more earth and stones. It was backbreaking and terrible work under continuous fire from the arrows of the defenders, but gradually Alexander created an earthwork strong enough to support the men and siege engines required to attack the stronghold.

When everything was in place, he and a party of 700 climbed the rock, hauling each other to the top. In this way he was able to take the Indians from one side while Ptolemy and his force confronted them from the other.

Many of the Indian defenders threw themselves from the cliffs rather than submit. Alexander made a sacrifice on the rock and garrisoned it with troops commanded by an Indian who had taken service under Alexander some time before.

Alexander was a leader who believed in encouraging his men. He knew fear and understood that most men felt it before committing themselves to battle. It is said that just before an encounter like that at the Rock of Aornos, Alexander was talking to a nervous young Macedonian soldier who was also called Alexander.

The king told him kindly, "You will have to prove yourself a brave man to live up to your name." The young man fought with great courage and was killed in the battle. It is said that Alexander was very sad at the news.

The army had come through the terrible march across and through the mountains. Their leader was still intent on going forward and taking on almost impossible odds. So far his luck and theirs had held, but for how much longer? The old troopers were tired of the perpetual marching, the never-ending battles and skirmishes. Maybe they were afraid that they had put their lives on the line once too often. Whatever the reason, they were starting to question the future.

How far? How much further? For how much longer would they go on being led by a general whose ambition would, as far as they could understand it, be limited only by coming to the ocean at the end of the world?

Unaware of his men's concerns, Alexander sent messages to Ambhi, the ruler of Taxila, in the area now known as Rawlpindi. He urged Ambhi to meet him and to bring with him other chiefs from the banks of the Indus. Alexander wanted to be able to find a way through this land without opposition. He'd learned through spies that Ambhi would be glad of his help against King Porus of Pauravas, whose kingdom threatened his security. Alexander knew there was a diplomatic deal to be done if Ambhi would meet him, and indeed the leader of Taxila agreed to do so. He was a wise man, and he and Alexander found that they liked each other.

They sat together in Alexander's tent while the army went through its daily routines - cleaning, mending weapons, caring for the horses, practising their various skills. The clamour of metal on metal, of men laughing and calling to friends, of work parties hauling in fuel all mixed with the blue smoke rising from campfires into the pale sky. To get to this point had taken eight years, fighting all the way. These were the men Ambhi knew could defeat his old neighbour and enemy, Porus. The two men sat together and talked.

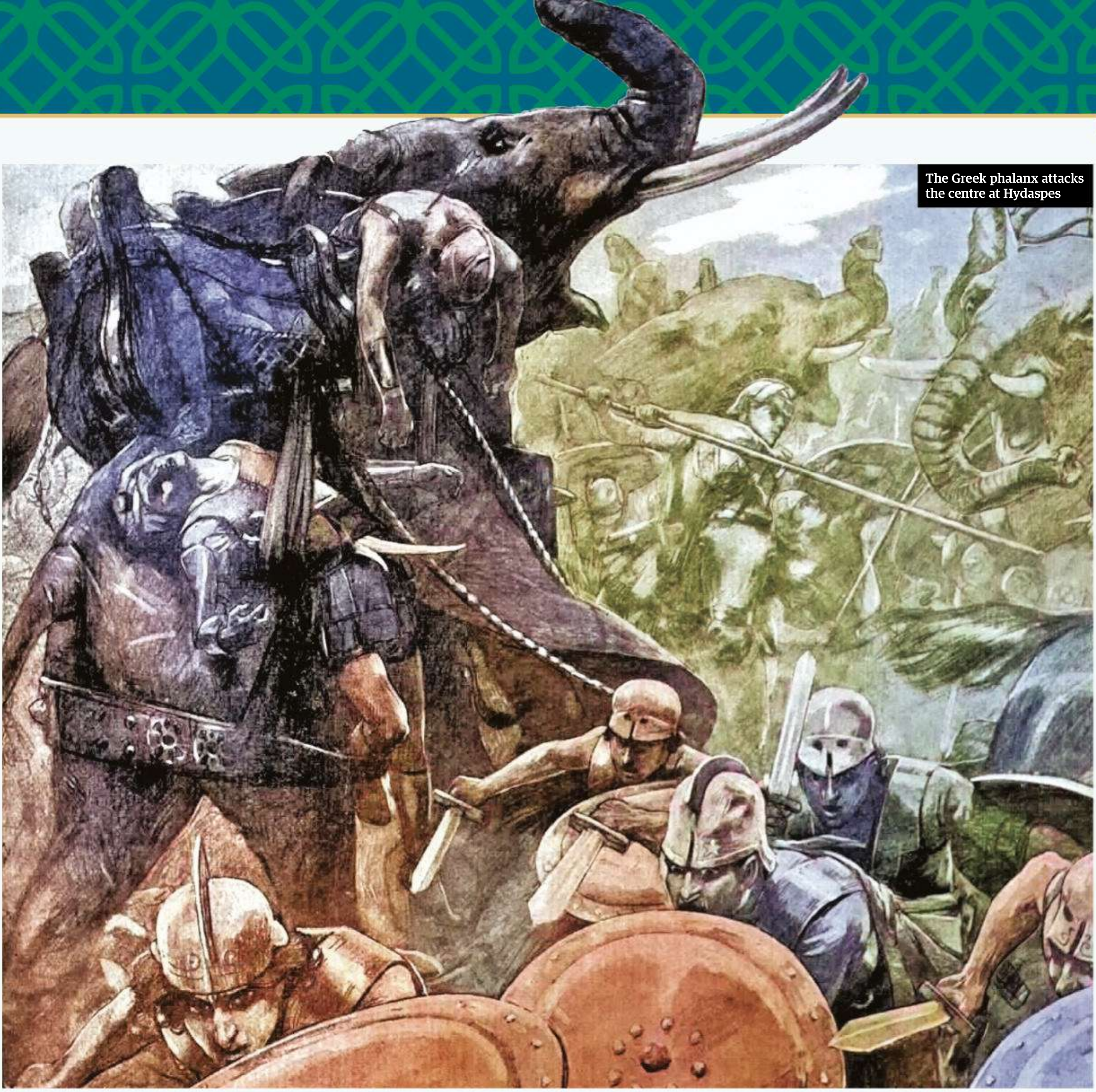
"What occasion is there for war between us? You are not come to take from us our water or other necessities of life. The only things that reasonable men fight for," said the Indian ruler. He smiled at the young man sitting in the doorway of the tent always watching his men going about the business of setting up camp and honing their battle skills while he conducted the business of the day.

Ambhi went on: "If I have more gold and silver and other possessions and am richer than you, I am willing to offer you a part. If I have less than you I have no objection to sharing in your bounty."

Alexander turned and took his hand. "If you think that your civil words will let you escape without a conflict you are deceived. I will fight with you to the last. But it shall be in favours and benefits, for you shall not defeat me in generosity."

An alliance was forged between the two men and Alexander moved on into more hostile territory towards the Hydaspes River.

Indian princes relied on mercenaries to fight for them and, from time to time, these mercenaries caused Alexander to lose many men. When he had overcome one particular town he made a


The Greek phalanx attacks the centre at Hydaspes

truce with the mercenaries and let them leave. They marched out without their weapons and were instantly put to death by Alexander's soldiers. Plutarch writes that this was a disgrace to Alexander's reputation as a soldier.

A CLASH OF KINGS

Alexander had to defeat Porus if he was to continue on his line of march across India, so he believed he had nothing to lose. The Battle of the Hydaspes was to be a terrible engagement.

As the army marched the 161 kilometres (100 miles) from Taxila to the Hydaspes, Alexander sent out scouting parties to reconnoitre the line of advance. They informed him that King Porus had placed his army on the eastern bank of the Hydaspes. He possessed a huge force with which to oppose the advancing Macedonian army comprised of cavalry, infantry, war chariots and hundreds of fighting elephants. The numbers depended on who was writing: Arrian, Diodorus or Curtius. Whatever the true figures, a vast force barred the way on the far bank of the Hydaspes, which was already beginning to flood from the monsoon rains. Alexander had little choice – he had to cross the river soon or he would be forced to wait for months.

He knew from his scouts and his own observations that the war elephants guarded the fords across the river, and he also knew that the horses, even his faithful Bucephalus, were terrified by the size and trumpeting of these huge animals.

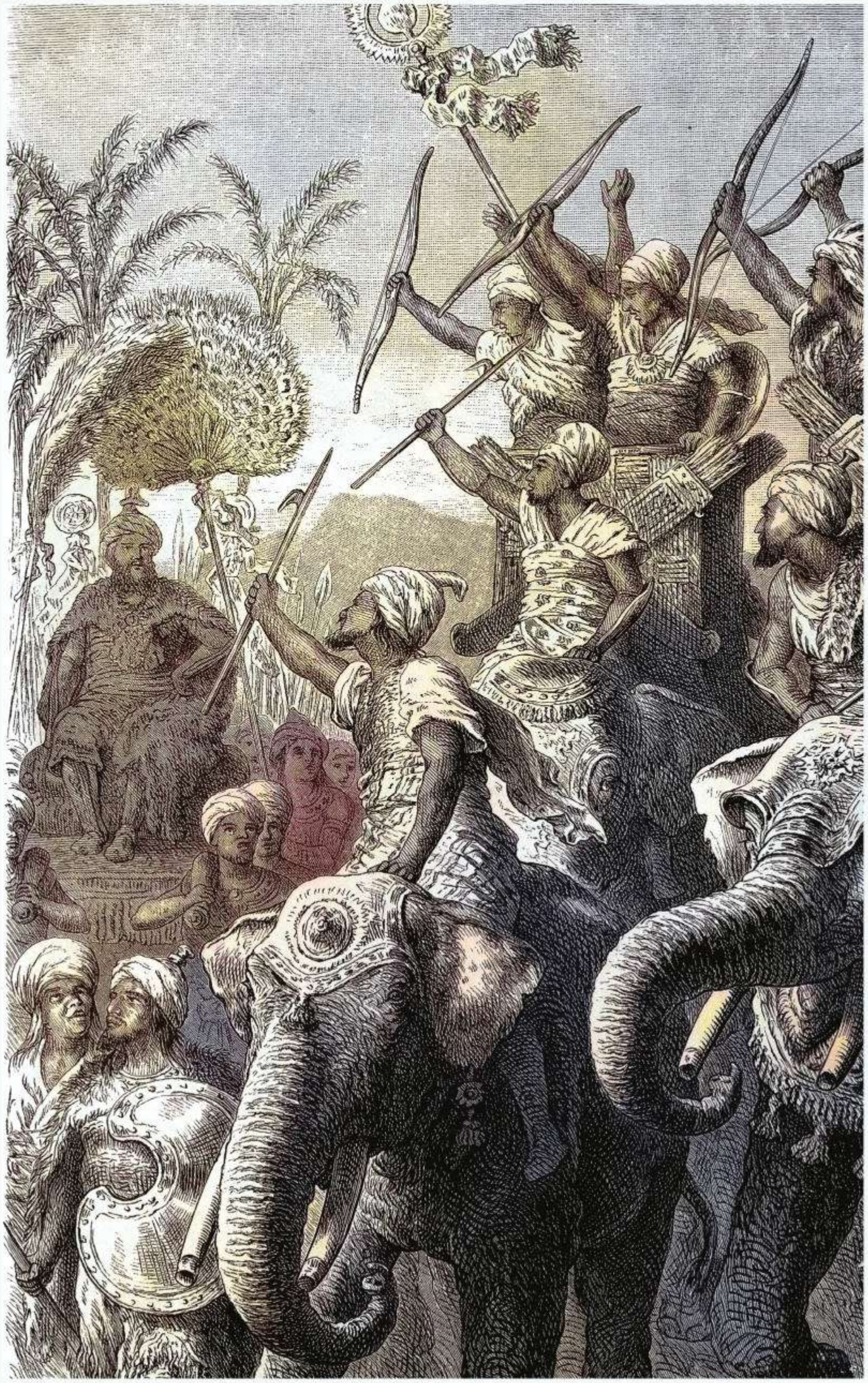
Merely getting his army across the swelling river would be a fantastic feat. To do so under continuous attack from the far bank would be an almost unthinkable achievement.

Arrian describes the location: "There was a rock on the bank of the Hydaspes where a channel makes a mighty sweep. The rock is covered with trees. At a small distance was an island overrun with woods and uninhabited and fit for his purpose. Considering that his cavalry, as well as the infantry, might be concealed there, he determined to ferry over... The headland and island were 17 miles (27 kilometres) from the enemy camp."

Alexander also observed a deep ditch near the bank in which he could hide the movements of his men, their horses and even their supporting arms. This was to prove crucial in winning the tactical battle, which relied as much on subterfuge and psychology as martial prowess.

Alexander ordered his cavalry to parade at night along the western bank, making a noise and raising their battle cry from time to time. This he did for

© Getty Images, Wikipedia



“Alexander took the cavalry and infantry across the river to engage the enemy”

several nights, and each time Porus marched his elephants up and down the opposite shore to block any attempted crossing. Alexander split the army into a number of separate columns and ordered them to march up and down the banks in daylight as if looking for a suitable place to cross. He then had corn brought into the main camp from the surrounding country as if he intended to wait until the rains stopped. He ordered tent skins be converted into rafts by stuffing them with hay and kept fires burning at various places along the bank at night. Pickets were set up with orders to raise a din to ensure that the enemy was never sure if an attack was imminent or from where it might come.

Secretly, using the wide ditches and the natural hiding places that led to the river, Alexander had brought 30 oared galleys and boats in sections to be ready for the river crossing.

It was essential that Alexander make the crossing with a large enough force to turn one wing of Porus' army. In that way the centre would have to turn to protect itself and Alexander's army could sweep across the swollen river and attack the now-vulnerable core.

He embarked his advance force of 5,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry on an extremely stormy night. Despite the conditions, they clambered into their galleys and headed for what they believed was the far bank of the river. They were wrong.

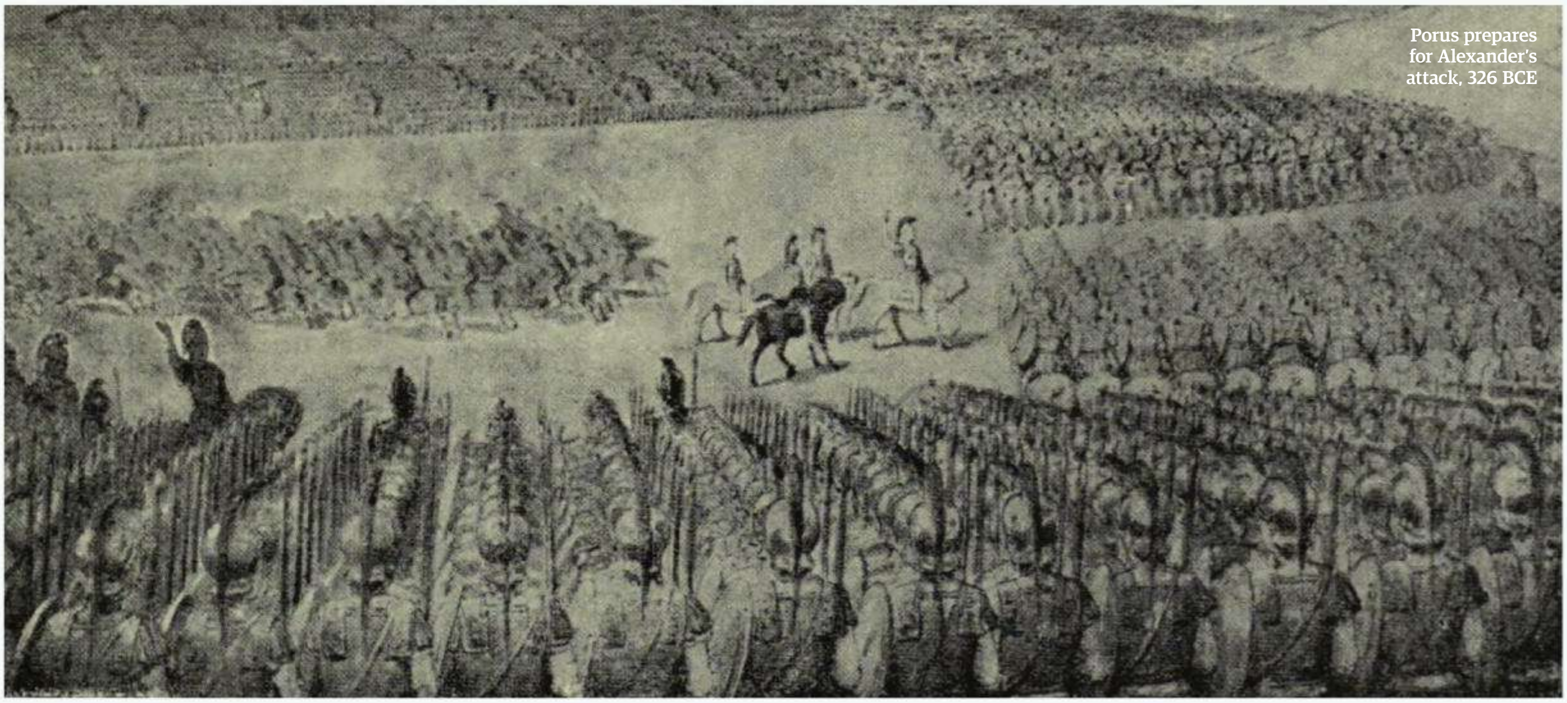
Alexander found himself, his bodyguard and cavalry on a second island separated from the far shore by a wide channel swollen with the rains. As Arrian wrote, “At its shallowest it was over the breast of the foot soldiers and so deep that the horses only keep their heads above the river.”

It seemed impossible to cross before Porus moved his army to face them. However, Alexander took the cavalry and infantry across the river onto the far bank, regrouped, skirmished with soldiers from Porus' main army and then advanced ten kilometres (six miles) to engage the enemy.

Porus had to decide if the movement of the boats his scouts had seen on the river beyond the islands was yet another feint. He hesitated too long, and this delay completely justified Alexander's previous manoeuvres along the river bank. By the time Porus moved Alexander's force had regrouped and was advancing in battle formation. This was the first of several brilliant tactical successes for Alexander at the Hydaspes.

Porus sent one of his sons with 3,000 cavalry and 120 chariots to oppose Alexander. This force was destroyed, with Porus' son among the dead, and the chariots that had been forced to stop in the mud near the river bank were captured.

Now was the time for the rest of the army to cross and rejoin Alexander. As they did so Porus drew up his new front. The elephants formed a line in front of the infantry in order to terrify Alexander's cavalry. Behind them were the foot soldiers, who extended in wings on both sides, and on the flanks of the infantry more cavalry were stationed behind the war chariots Porus had positioned in reserve.


Porus prepares for Alexander's attack, 326 BCE

Alexander used the lie of the land skilfully to confuse Porus. He sent a squadron of cavalry under a commander named Coenus to work its way, under the cover of the wide ditches, behind and to the right of the enemy.

Alexander died in 323 BCE, plunging his empire into a period of war before it was divided up among his generals.

Alexander's infantry were going to have to confront the centre of Porus' army without the support of the cavalry. To do this, he knew he had to destroy the remaining enemy cavalry, otherwise they would close like the jaws of a pincer on his attacking infantrymen. He had to ensure that all of Porus' cavalry was engaged on one flank only.

This he engineered magnificently. Horse archers would engage the cavalry on the left wing while a force of cavalry that was very obviously too weak to defeat the Indian cavalry was to charge into the fray. Porus, Alexander judged, would be tempted by their obvious weakness and send his cavalry from the right wing to ensure the destruction of Alexander's archers and also his cavalry at the same time. His assumption proved correct; Porus took the bait.

As soon as Porus committed his troops, Coenus, observing this from his place of hiding to the rear, was to attack in the flank and rear of the enemy while Alexander charged the front. Advancing infantrymen had to brave the savagery of the war elephants. Men were tossed aside and broken by the swinging trunks of the animals; others were stamped to a pulp under their huge feet. Slowly, though, the infantrymen got close enough to use axes to hamstring the animals. The elephants eventually backed away from the advancing phalanx, which by now had linked their shields. As they backed away they panicked, wheeled around and stamped their keepers and the Indian soldiers scurrying beneath them. They turned to face the javelins of the Macedonians and went on slowly backing away, trumpeting in fear. Alexander surrounded the whole enemy line with his cavalry and the Indian army was slaughtered. Porus refused to surrender even though he was weak from his wounds and loss of blood. Only when Alexander sent an Indian called Meroes to ask him not to sacrifice his life in vain, did he yield.

The battle at the Hydaspes was over within a day. As many as 12,000 Indians were killed, and 9,000 others, plus 80 elephants, were captured. In contrast, Alexander had lost just 1,000 men. It was perhaps the most glorious of his victories, but it would also be his last major battlefield triumph.

Exhausted by years of hard fighting, Alexander's troops refused to follow him any further, despite their king's desperate pleas that they were only 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) from the edge of the world (according to the inaccurate Greek maps he was relying on). With no alternative, Alexander turned for home, a journey that would see him conquer the Malli clans in what is today Punjab, Pakistan, where he was almost killed fighting in the city of Multan.

He later led part of his forces through the Gedrosian Desert, located west of the Indus River. His army suffered huge losses as it trudged through the sand, but eventually Alexander made it back to Babylon, where he began to plot new campaigns. However, his dreams of further conquest were smothered by the cold embrace of death in 323 BCE at the age of just 32.

To this day, nobody is certain quite how he perished. Some accounts claim that he developed a fever after a heavy drinking session, while others state that he died as a result of consuming unmixed wine while paying tribute to Heracles. Either way, the suspicion remains that his drink was poisoned.

What is beyond doubt is the impact his campaigns in the East had on India. Several states were completely wiped out, and countless natives were slaughtered in sieges and battles. This wave of destruction drastically reduced the strength of the northern states in particular, thereby paving the way for the rise of the Mauryan Empire, which was founded by Chandragupta Maurya in 322 BCE. In time, his grandson Ashoka would extend the empire's boundaries to encompass the bulk of the Indian subcontinent. Such a rapid unification of once disparate and warring territories may well have taken much longer to accomplish were it not for Alexander, who also founded several cities in India, including Nikaia and Boukephala, and established Greek satrapies along the Indus. The lands ruled over by Alexander's elected provincial governors (satraps) would later be defeated by Chandragupta Maurya in the Seleucid-Mauryan War of 305–303 BCE.

Equally as important were the cultural links made between the Greek and Indian worlds as a result of the invasion. From new trade routes via land and sea to the establishment of the Indo-Greek school of art known as Gandhara, East and West were connected like never before.

He may not have conquered all of India as he'd hoped, but Alexander left behind a legacy that would shape India for millennia.

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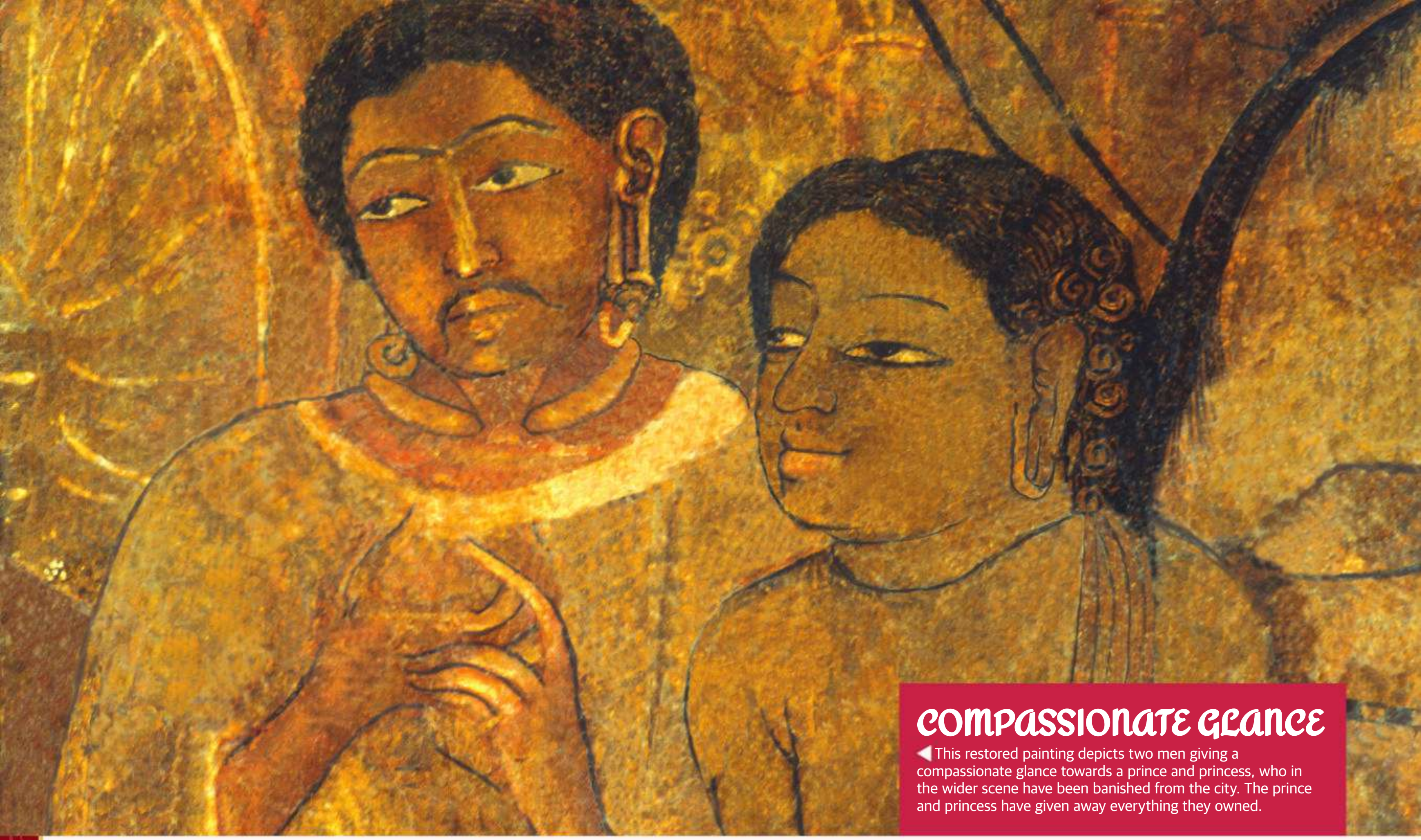


COMPASSIONATE GLANCE

◀ This restored painting depicts two men giving a compassionate glance towards a prince and princess, who in the wider scene have been banished from the city. The prince and princess have given away everything they owned.

THE AJANTA CAVES

An updated book showcases India's ancient Buddhist paintings in a new light

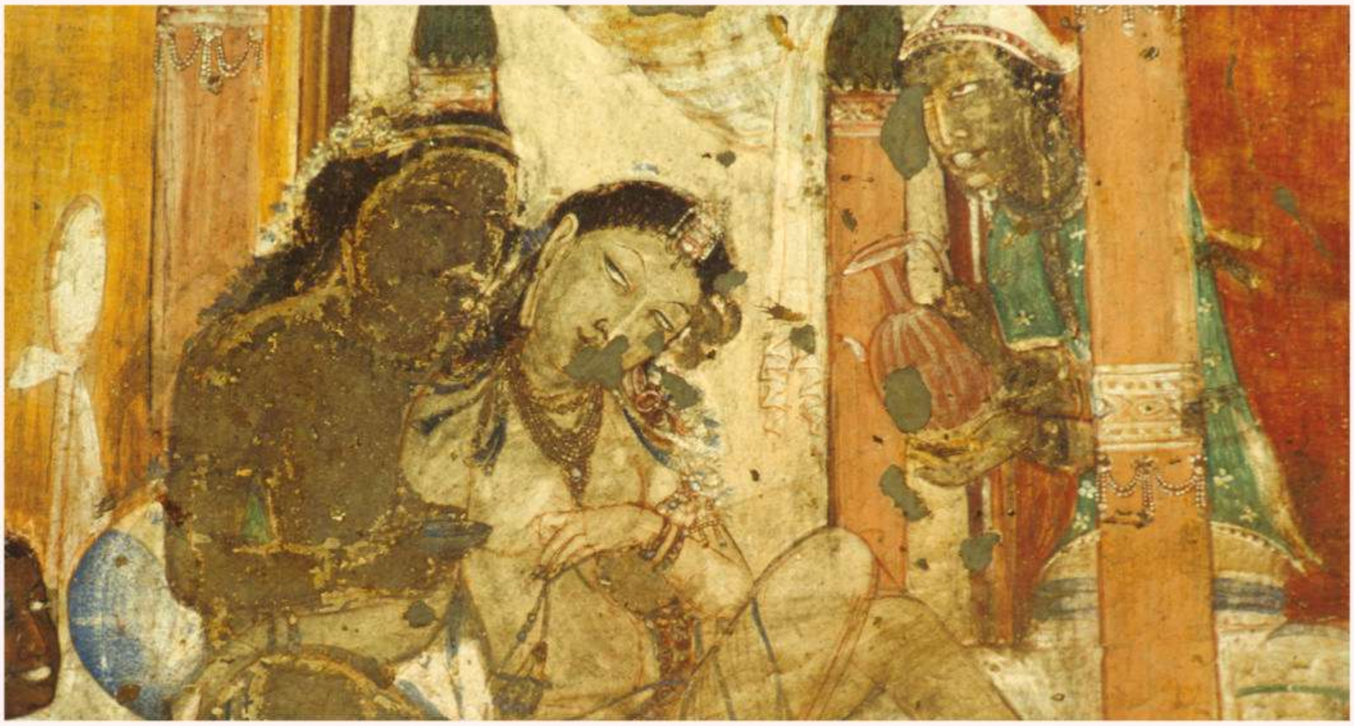
In 1819, a group of British hunters following a tiger through the jungle near the city of Aurangabad in western India made an amazing discovery.

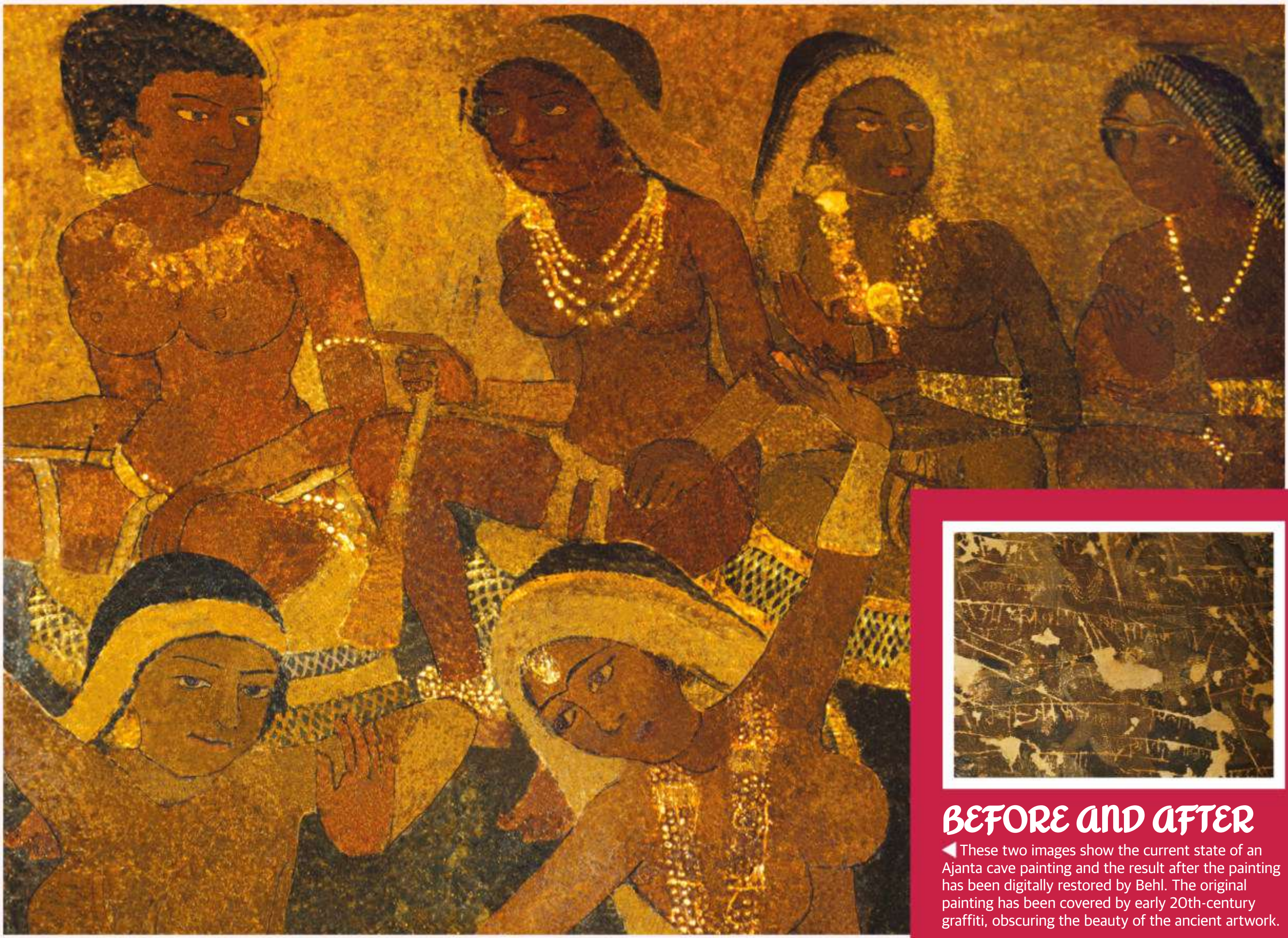
When the tiger disappeared into a ravine, the hunting party followed and came across a man-made entrance in the rock face. Heading through the entrance, they happened upon a Buddhist stupa – a domed building used for meditation and to house relics – carved into the cave at the end of a long hallway. Along the walls of the cave were a myriad of beautiful murals. It turned out that this was one of 31 man-made caves, all Buddhist monuments, the oldest of which dated from between 90 and 75 BCE. The paintings inside the Ajanta Caves date from between the 2nd century BCE and the 6th century CE and are some of the most significant pieces of art from the ancient world. Over the years the quality of the murals has diminished, but now images of these magnificent paintings have been digitally restored to showcase their true beauty.

Art historian and photographer Benoy K Behl's restored photographs are now displayed in the updated paperback version of *The Ajanta Caves*, which showcases the murals as they were intended to be seen.

PALACE SCENE

This image shows a small part of a wider mural of a palace scene. The painted scene is taken from a popular Jataka tale, one of many that make up the literature that tells the stories of the former lives of the Buddha. It is found in Cave 17.





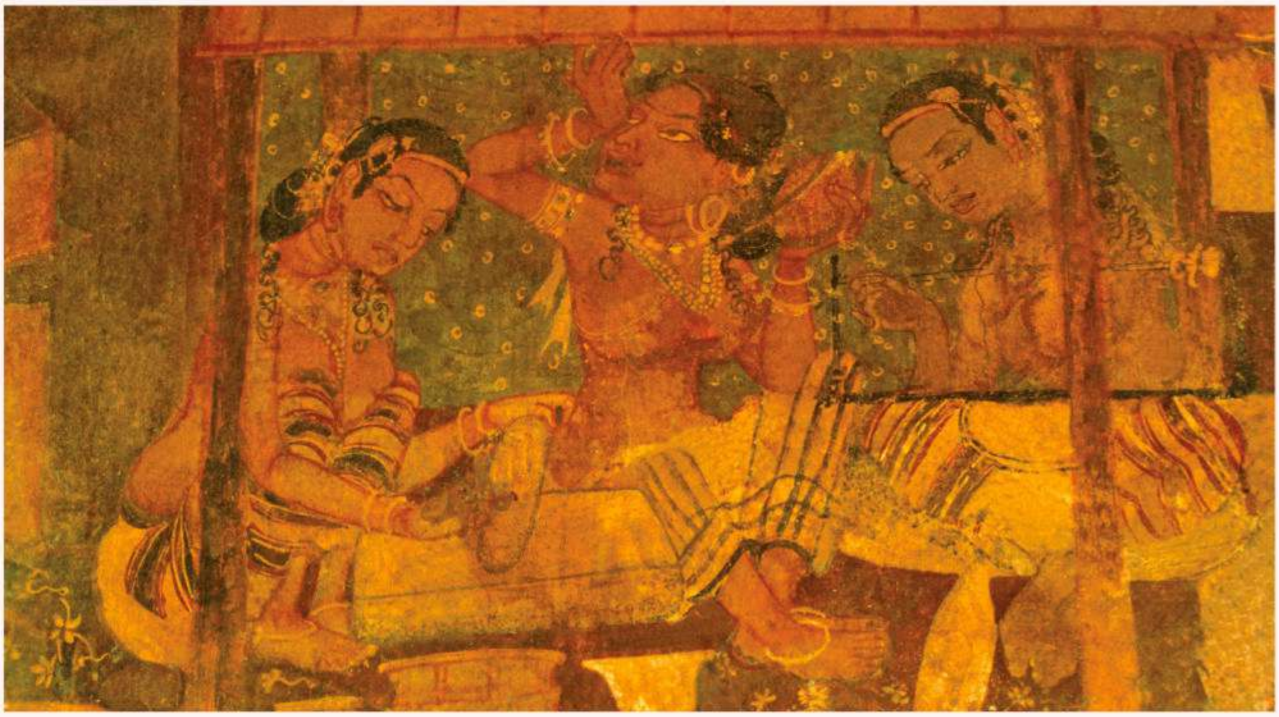
BEFORE AND AFTER

These two images show the current state of an Ajanta cave painting and the result after the painting has been digitally restored by Behl. The original painting has been covered by early 20th-century graffiti, obscuring the beauty of the ancient artwork.

All images: © Benoy K Behl

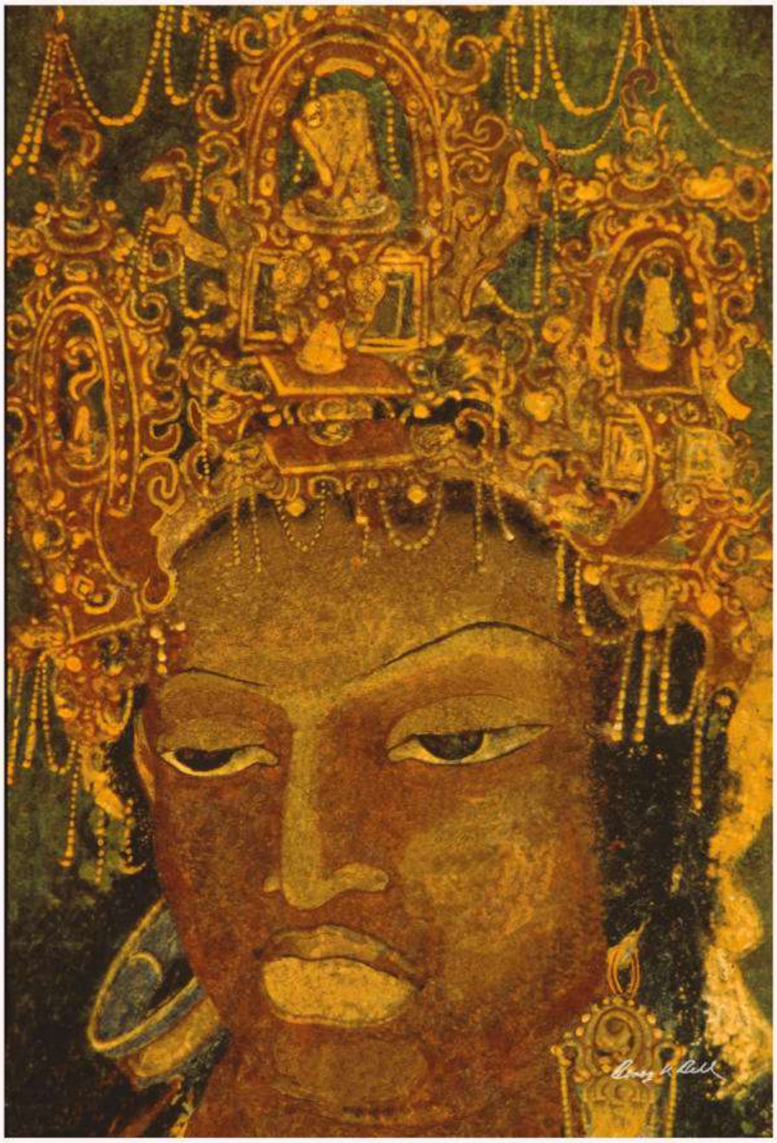
KITCHEN SCENE

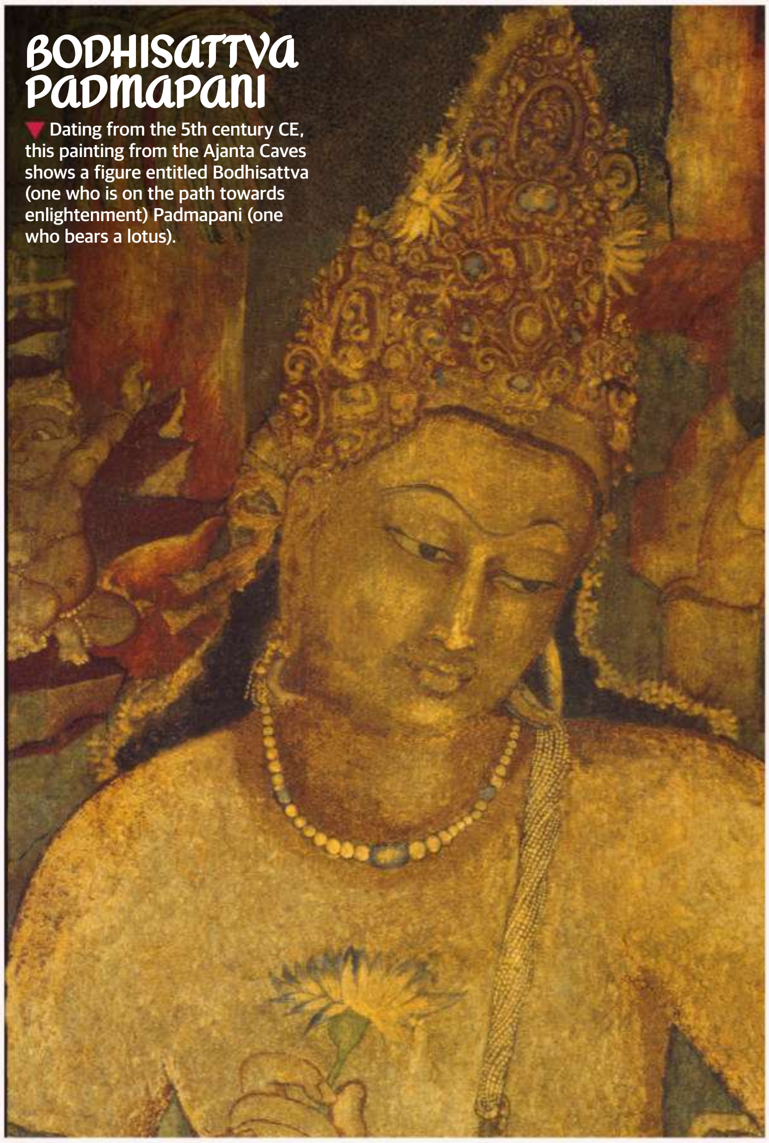
In this kitchen scene women are depicted grinding spices as one of them pushes her hair out of her eyes. This is just one of many scenes of daily life shown in the Ajanta paintings that provide some insight into how people from this area lived in ancient times.



DIVINE BEING

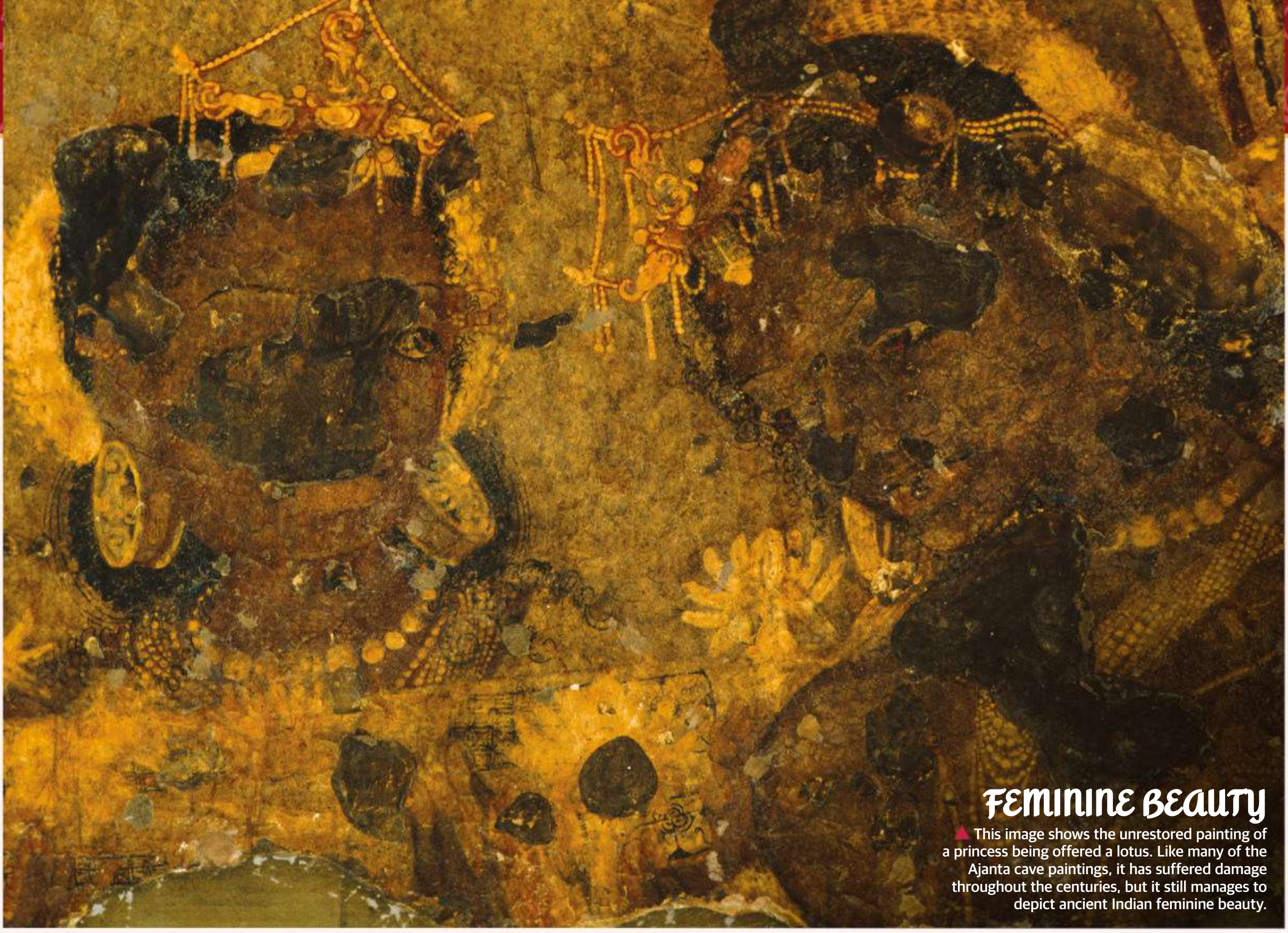
Digitally restored so that we can see it in all its glory, this impressive painting shows Bodhisattva Vajrapani, the Bearer of the Thunderbolt. Located by the main shrine in Cave 1 of the Ajanta Caves, it is considered to be a masterpiece of the group of murals.





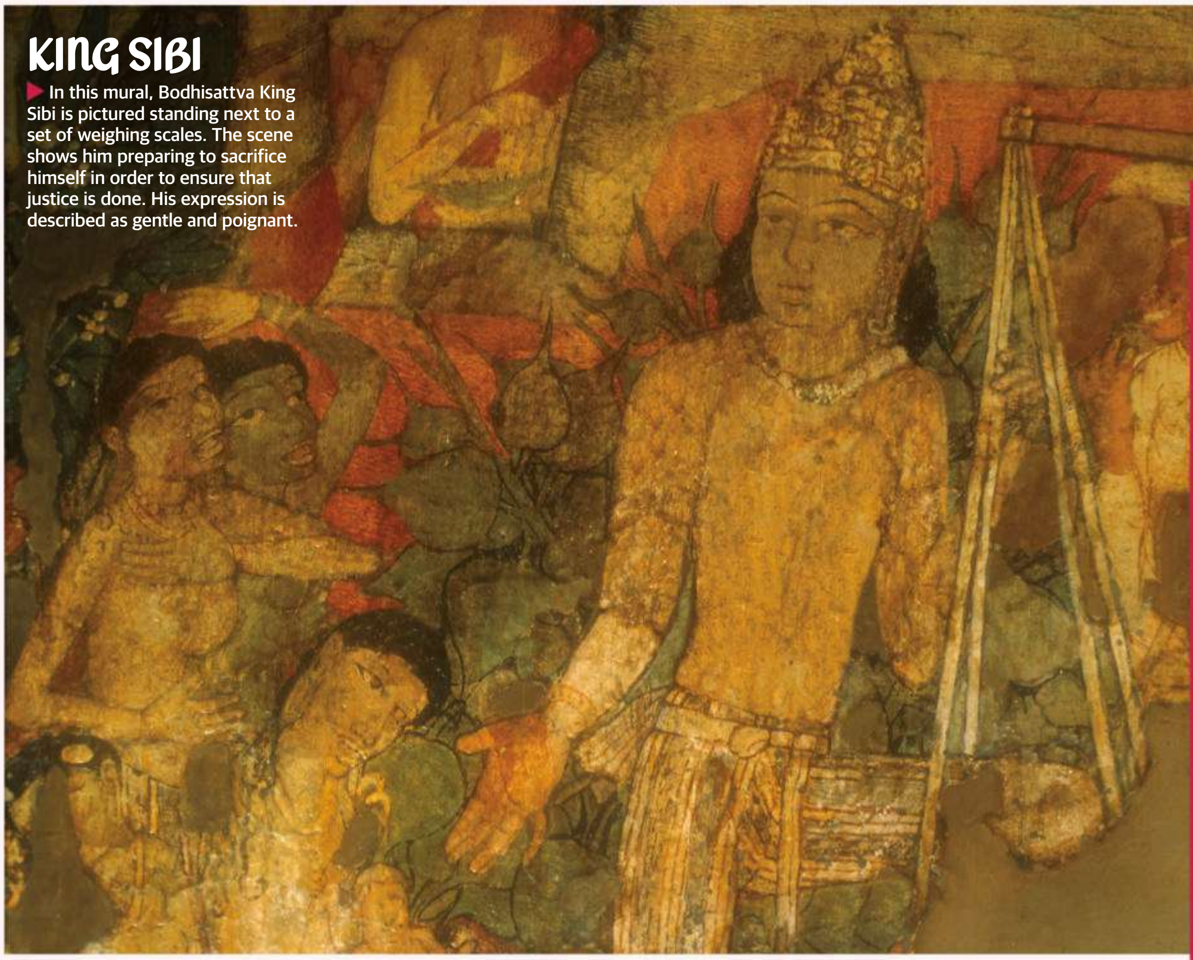
BODHISATTVA PADMAPANI

Dating from the 5th century CE, this painting from the Ajanta Caves shows a figure entitled Bodhisattva (one who is on the path towards enlightenment) Padmapani (one who bears a lotus).



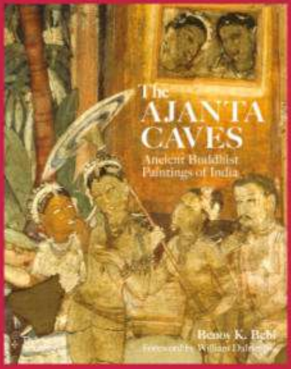
FEMININE BEAUTY

▲ This image shows the unrestored painting of a princess being offered a lotus. Like many of the Ajanta cave paintings, it has suffered damage throughout the centuries, but it still manages to depict ancient Indian feminine beauty.



KING SIBI

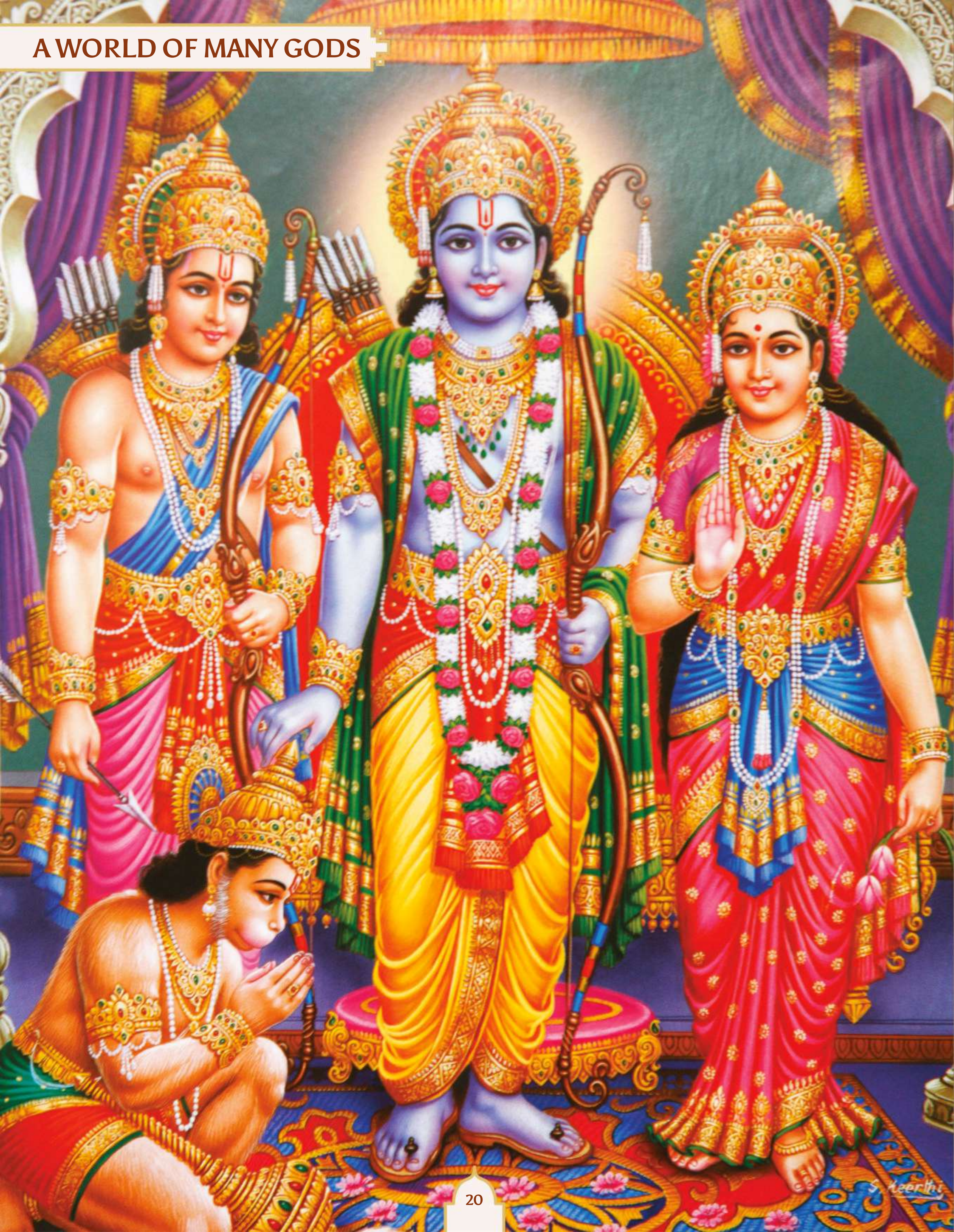
▶ In this mural, Bodhisattva King Sibi is pictured standing next to a set of weighing scales. The scene shows him preparing to sacrifice himself in order to ensure that justice is done. His expression is described as gentle and poignant.


The AJANTA CAVES
Ancient Buddhist Paintings of India
Benoy K. Behl
Foreword by William Dalrymple

The Ajanta Caves: Ancient Buddhist Paintings of India

(Thames & Hudson, 2023) by Benoy K Behl is available to buy online.

All images: © Benoy K. Behl


S. Keerthi

A WORLD OF MANY GODS

Explore India's rich religious history and learn how its many faiths have shaped its culture and politics

Written by Nina Mattiello Azadeh

India – the land of many gods – is also the land of many religions. While it is a secular state, religion has been a major part of Indian culture for millennia and continues to play a part in the politics of the country today. Often known as the 'land of festivals', the Indian calendar incorporates the holidays of the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Sikh and Christian traditions.

Hindus make up almost 80 per cent of the Indian population, although Islam is on the rise, with over 14 per cent of the population identifying as Muslim. Christians make up 2.3 per cent and Sikhs 1.7 per cent. Buddhism, although forming in India almost 2500 years ago, is now on the decline, as is Jainism. However, these low percentages can be misleading – with a population of over 1.4 billion, devotees of even the minority religions number in the tens of millions.

It is also worth noting that although most Indian states have a Hindu majority, the Punjab (northern India) is 58 per cent Sikh, Jammu and Kashmir (also northern India) is 68 per cent Muslim, and Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland (in the east) have Christian majority populations.

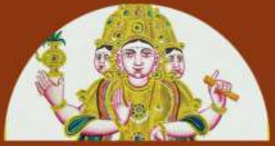
> "Devotees of even the minority religions number in the tens of millions"

THE HOME OF HINDUISM

It is suggested that Hinduism is the oldest religion, although its origins are contested. It is widely believed that it originated in the Indus Valley, near modern-day Pakistan, between 2300 and 1500 BCE. However, evidence of early Hindu practice has been found from as early as 3500 BCE along what was once the Sharavati River. A number of artefacts have been found along the now-deserted home of the Indus-Sarasvati people, including images of deities, ceremonies and symbols of worship.

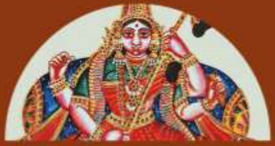
HINDU GODS

Hinduism is a polytheistic religion that practices the worship of a multitude of gods – three main gods and goddesses and a huge range of local deities known as devas and devis. Each of these gods reflect a facet of the ultimate reality, Brahman, who is formless, without gender and the highest deity in Hinduism. Some of the most popular deities are:



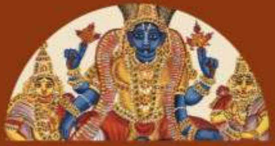
BRAHMA

Brahma is believed to be the creator of the universe. He is often depicted sitting on a lotus, with four arms and four heads.



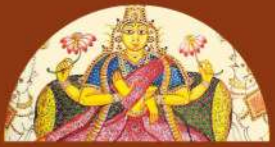
SARASWATI

The goddess of arts and learning. She is depicted wearing a white sari, carrying a musical instrument and sitting on a swan.



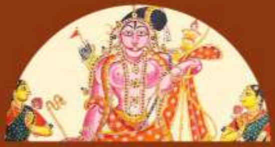
VISHNU

Vishnu protects the universe. He is often depicted with four arms, holding a conch, a discus and a lotus.



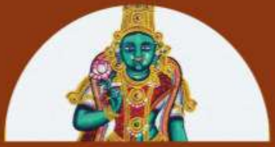
LAKSHMI

Lakshmi is the wife of Vishnu and is the goddess of wealth and good fortune. She is worshiped during Diwali.



SHIVA

Shiva is the god of transformation. He is depicted with three eyes, a moon on his forehead and a serpent around his neck.



PARVATI

Parvati is the wife of Shiva and is the goddess of beauty and fertility. She is the daughter of Himalaya, the mountain.

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THE SACRED TEXTS

Hindu sacred texts are known as the Vedas. It is believed that these texts were received from the divine by ancient sages and introduced to India by the Aryans between 1200 and 200 BCE.

The Vedic texts are split into four parts, each containing four chronological sections:

THE SAMHITAS: HYMNS OF PRAISE TO GOD

The Samhitas contain 1,028 hymns praising the ancient gods. They also contains a handbook for how to perform ritual sacrifices (a rite exclusively practiced by priests) including the chant used during these events. There is also a section about the pre-Aryan traditions that includes ideas about magic and formulae for spells.

THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishad texts were based in the Vedic tradition but also include the philosophy of the Hindu tradition. This includes the ideas of the soul and reincarnation, ethical and moral principles, and the notion of karma – the universal law of cause and effect.

THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most popular Hindu texts and takes the form of a dialogue between Prince Arjuna (a warrior) and Krishna (his charioteer). It tells a moral story; Krishna encourages Arjuna to fulfil his sacred duty and go to war. It also defines the classical schools of yoga – the spiritual paths of knowledge, devotion, action and meditation.

THE RAMAYANA

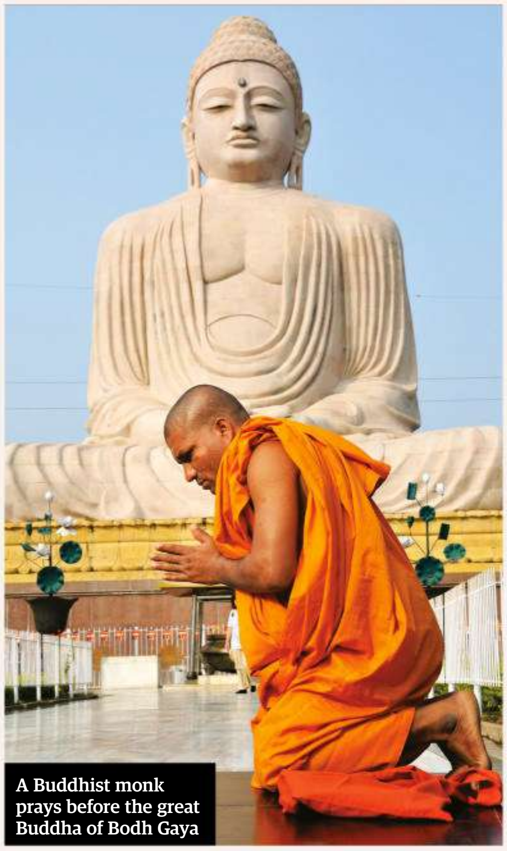
The Ramayana tells the story of Prince Rama, an avatar of Vishnu, and his wife, Sita, who are sent into exile. It is a story of good overcoming evil and of love against the odds.

> "Many have small shrines within their homes dedicated to individual gods and goddesses associated with their particular interests, lives or local communities"

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Temples are the sacred meeting places associated with Hinduism, although worshippers are not mandated to attend. Many have small shrines within their homes dedicated to individual gods and goddesses associated with their particular interests, lives or local communities. There are some simple practices that should be followed when entering the temple, either as a worshipper or a visitor. Think of it as like being a guest in someone's home; many of the practices are signs of respect to the deity themselves. Everyone is required to remove their shoes when entering a temple complex in order to maintain a clear and pure atmosphere. Similarly, a bell is often rung when entering to bring focus. Next, an act of prostration is recommended – bowing down and even touching your head on the ground are signs of humility. Finally, it is customary to bring a token or a gift for the deity, such as flowers, fruit or food.

The tower of the Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram



A Buddhist monk prays before the great Buddha of Bodh Gaya

THE JOURNEY TO ENLIGHTENMENT: THE FORMATION OF BUDDHISM

In stark contrast to Hinduism's many gods, Buddhism is a non-theistic faith, meaning that there are no gods to worship. Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of the faith, lived in 500 BCE and was a prince in Nepal. He chose to leave behind his luxurious life and travel to India in the pursuit of enlightenment. He reached this by the age of 35 and became the Buddha, teaching these ways of being to others. Buddhist teachings are focused on the human and nature rather than centring around a deity.

Bodh Gaya is one of the holiest pilgrimage sites for Buddhists. This is supposedly the spot in which Siddhartha Gautama sat under the Bohdi Tree (a sacred fig tree) for 49 days to gain enlightenment. The current tree on the site is said to have been planted by Emperor Ashoka, a devotee of the Buddha who was responsible for spreading Buddhist practice across India. Within the Bodh Gaya complex Ashoka also built a temple. At the centre of this temple a statue of the Buddha was added that measures eight metres (26 feet) tall.

The Buddha Park of Ravangla (or Tathagata Tsal) features a statue of Buddha that stands 40 metres (130 feet) tall

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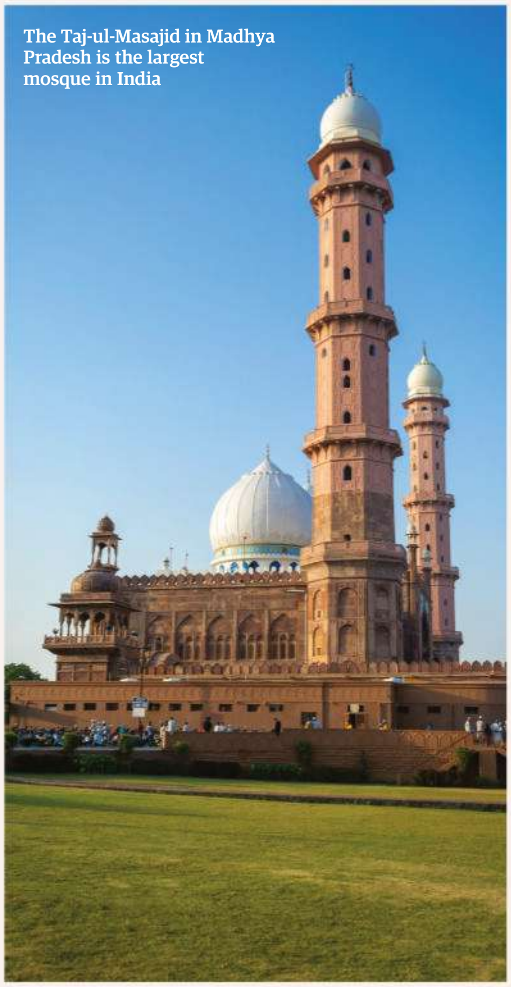
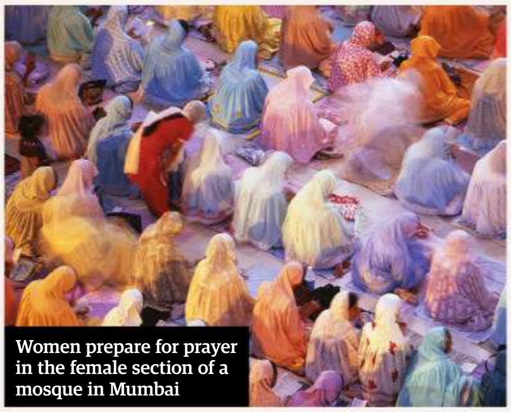
A MONOTHEISTIC APPROACH: ISLAM COMES TO INDIA

There are more than 500 million Muslims currently practicing across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Islam came to India in the 10th century through a Turkic tribe who by 1200 had conquered most of northern India. By 1526, the Mughal Empire had also invaded, extending Islamic rule through the rest of India. Although invaders, they preached a doctrine of religious tolerance as they went. From the end of the Mughal Empire in 1707 there was much European activity across India, but it was British rule that contributed most to India's modern Hindu-Muslim conflict. A large factor in this was the introduction of the Indian Councils Act by the British Government in 1909. Through Queen Victoria's promise of equality of opportunity for all Indians two councils were set up: the Muslim League and the Hindu-led Indian Civil Service.

Another incident that added to inter-religious tension was the partitioning of Bengal - otherwise known as the creation of the state of Pakistan - by the British in 1947, which created minority communities on both sides. Around 35 million Muslims stayed in India after partition, although current political feeling has made this difficult in recent years. Islam, also in strong contrast to Hinduism, teaches that there is one, indivisible God - Allah. The central religious text of the Islamic faith is the Quran.


The Taj-ul-Masajid in Madhya Pradesh is the largest mosque in India

The Taj Mahal was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983


Women prepare for prayer in the female section of a mosque in Mumbai

THE CREATION OF SIKHISM

Sikhism is a fairly modern religion in respect to those previously mentioned, being founded in the 15th century in northern India. Like Islam, Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that believes in one supreme creator. Conversely, like in Buddhism and Hinduism, the cycle of reincarnation is a large part of Sikh belief and so practice and disposition within this life is important. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, strove to find a middle way between what were becoming two opposing religious factions. Justice and loving those around you continue to be a key part of the Sikh way of life, often with personal sacrifice playing a huge part.

However, with the addition of politics, conflicts emerged with Sikhs too. The Sikh Khalsa (the Company of the Pure) was created in 1699 and were identified, as many Sikhs are today, with the five Ks: kesh (uncut hair, often in a turban), kangha (comb), kirpan (sword), kara (a steel or iron bangle) and kaccha (breeches). The Khalsa often found themselves in conflict with Afghan invaders in the north of India and with the Muslim leaders of the Lahore region. They also became embroiled in the political upheaval that took place under British rule.

A Sikh man offers free tea to pilgrims at the Golden Temple in the Punjab region

INDIA'S MINORITY RELIGIONS

JAINISM

Jainism is an integral part of Indian culture, despite the fact that less than one per cent of the country continue to practice this ancient faith. It carries some similar traits to Buddhism, such as following a path to enlightenment and non-violent practices, and to Hinduism, including ideas of reincarnation and karma.

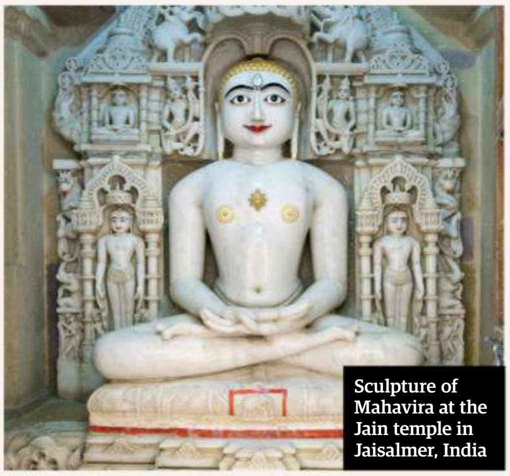
CHRISTIANITY

Another minority religion that has a history in India is Christianity. Some say that Christianity here dates back as far as the earliest followers of Jesus. There are limited details about St Thomas in the Bible, apart from the fact that he was present at the Last Supper and the death and resurrection of Jesus, but a book written by a Syrian scholar between 200-400 CE describes St Thomas' first mission across modern-day Afghanistan and the Punjab region as well as down to Kerala, beginning in 52 CE. Tradition states that he evangelised as he went, and still today 22 per cent of the country's Christian population live in these areas.

Christianity grew in India through European influence. Roman Catholicism entered India with the arrival of the Portuguese Empire in the 16th century. Anglicanism was brought by the British, Calvinism by the Dutch, and Methodism and Baptist practices came via Americans. All these different denominations of Christianity became popular throughout the 19th century and remain to this day.

Jain pilgrims visit the Palitana temples in the Shatrunjaya hills, Gujarat

Worshippers prepare for the Christmas Day service at St Thomas Catholic Basilica in Tamil Nadu


Sculpture of Mahavira at the Jain temple in Jaisalmer, India

Worshippers are covered in coloured powder during Holi festivities

COLOURFUL CELEBRATIONS

With an estimated 1.2 million places of worship, India is a devoted land. Much of its religious practice has been subsumed into culture and is part of the lives of Indians throughout the world. For example, over half of Indian Christians also believe in karma and celebrate the festivals of other religions, such as Diwali and Holi. Colour plays a large part in Indian religious practice, as with Holi, the Hindu festival of colours, in which bonfires are lit and colourful powder is thrown to celebrate the triumph of good over evil, light over dark and spring over winter. Similarly, the tapestry of religion and religious practice across India creates a bright and colourful dynamic in which different people and practices come together to create a truly unique spiritual and cultural landscape. The cultures of religious practice in India have also spread further than the borders of the country. With 60 million Hindus now living across the global diaspora, practices such as yoga and the colourful festivities of Holi are now enjoyed throughout the world by people of all religions and none.

> "The tapestry of religious practice creates a bright and colourful dynamic"

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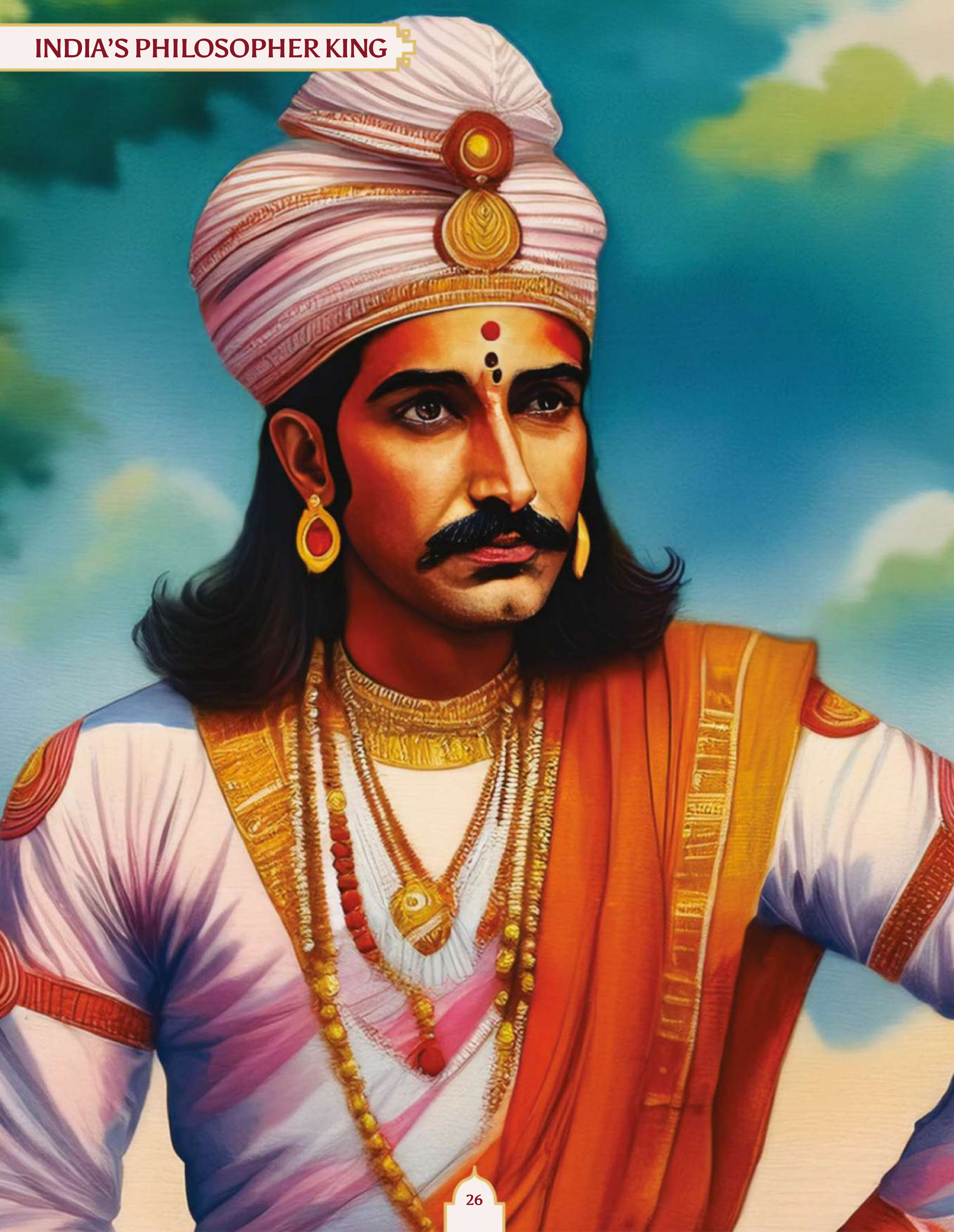

INDIA'S PHILOSOPHER KING

While Ashoka began his reign as a bloodthirsty conqueror, he soon had a change of heart, creating the world's first welfare state

Written by Hareth Al Bustani

At the start of his long reign, India's King Ashoka seemed destined to become one of history's great conquerors. Instead, having spilled much blood to seize and expand his realm, he did something far more remarkable – he disavowed violence.

The move was all the more spectacular considering his lineage. His grandfather, Chandragupta, was a force to be reckoned with. A brilliant warrior, Chandragupta commanded a mercenary band in the service of Alexander the Great before overthrowing India's Nanda kingdom and establishing his own dynasty, the Maurya in 322 BCE. He went on to unite the subcontinent's north and west, kicking the Macedonians out – with an army of 600,000 men, 8,000 elephants and 30,000 cavalry – and ruling over the subcontinent's greatest empire for a quarter of a century. The Jains say he abdicated the throne to his son before fasting himself to death.

Indian society was governed by an increasingly rigid caste system, topped by the Brahman class of Vedic priests. Though Chandragupta was born to one of the lower castes, he filled his court with Brahman. His son, Bindusara, went on to subjugate the subcontinent's south, cutting through the Deccan plateau into Mysore – earning himself the nickname "Enemy-Slayer". Although he failed to capture the kingdom of Kalinga to the east, he was said to have fathered 101 children, naming his eldest son, Sushima, his heir. One of his numerous dalliances resulted in a boy named Ashoka, a child who seemed set for a life of misery and obscurity. Not only did he suffer from a skin condition that left him "rough and unpleasant to touch", but he was prone to fainting and fits of epilepsy.

His afflictions made him a wicked youth, supposedly burning his entire harem alive after hearing them gossiping about his skin. Short and stout, he depended entirely on his wits, making an ally of his father's chief minister, with whom he schemed against his brothers. Eager to put these skills to good use and keep his son at arm's length, the king sent Ashoka, now known as "the Wrathful", to put down a rebellion in the northwestern province of Taxila.

Receiving a hero's welcome, Ashoka went on to forge alliances with two mountain leaders of Kashmir – so successfully, his father named him the viceroy of Ujjain. There he met a merchant's daughter called Devi, a committed Buddhist, and defied convention by marrying her for love rather than prestige. Back in the capital, the prodigious heir Sushima had caused an uproar by slapping a senior minister on the back of his bald head for comedic effect. Fearing the fickle whims of the future king, the courtiers had his rival claimant Ashoka recalled to the capital. Leaving his lowly wife and children behind, Ashoka returned and married Asandhimitra, who came from a small kingdom north of modern Delhi, naming her his chief queen. Sushima, meanwhile, was sent to suppress another revolt in Taxila.

In 274 BCE, the king fell gravely ill and ordered Sushima to return, instructing Ashoka to take his place. Desperate to remain in the capital at this critical juncture, Ashoka feigned sickness and had the chief minister intercept the message to Sushima. Incensed, Ashoka then confronted his father, demanding he be named regent in a manner so shocking the emperor supposedly fell into an epileptic fit and died. When Sushima finally arrived at the capital he found his half-brother defended by a wall of Greek mercenaries. According to the Mahayana Buddhist account, the chief minister dug a ditch within the eastern gate, filled it with coals and covered it with reeds and dirt, before egging the crown prince on by encouraging him to seize his throne. As Sushima rushed into the unguarded eastern gate, he tripped into the fiery hole, enduring a slow, painful demise.

In the ensuing four years legend tells how Ashoka killed his remaining 98 half-brothers one by one, sparing only his uterine sibling, Vitashoka. Having finally wiped out all other male heirs, he enjoyed the rites of coronation. During the

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ritual, he was cleansed, anointed and consecrated by Brahman priests, emerging a king of divine authority. Now he was the physical embodiment of Dharma itself - the cosmic truth. Adopting his grandfather's title, Devanampriya, 'Beloved of the gods', and the regal name Priyadasi, or 'Beloved to behold', he appointed his younger brother vice-regent. The emperor would go on to take six wives and scores of concubines, fathering 14 children.

He quickly adapted to leadership, assessing the affairs of the realm, receiving gold revenues, appointing officials, writing letters, overseeing military exercises and even going hunting. He nominated four princes to serve as viceroys, overseeing the *mahamatras* (district officers), who in turn managed a further group of subordinates. Cities, meanwhile, were run by commissioners with judicial powers.

In the early years of his reign Ashoka ruled with an iron fist, receiving daily briefings from an elaborate, far-reaching intelligence network of spies. One account tells of how he built a 'Hell Prison' that looked beautiful on the outside but was filled with the 'five great agonies' of Hell. He allegedly appointed a man called Chandagirika his chief executioner, tasking him with killing people by all manner of depraved tortures, only to later have him tortured to death.

Although he loved meat, and particularly enjoyed eating peacock, in 265 BCE - whether under the influence of his mother, his first wife or a young monk who miraculously survived his 'Hell' - he converted to Buddhism. It was a political masterstroke, one that would allow him to further whittle away the influence of the Brahman caste by simply transitioning their authority away to the humble Buddhists.

He immediately began replacing the 60,000 Brahman on his payroll with 60,000 Buddhist monks who saw their ranks swell with Brahman converts. However, it would be a few years before he took his new faith seriously enough to give up his beloved peacock meat. During this transition, in his eighth year in power, eager to accomplish what his father could not, the king went against the tenets of his newfound faith and invaded the unconquered eastern kingdom of Kalinga.

The ensuing war would prove far bloodier than he could have imagined. Although the king succeeded in subjugating and drawing Kalinga within his yoke, 100,000 were killed in the violence and 150,000 displaced. Even amid the glory of conquest, as he toured his new province, littered with corpses and ruins, the human toll shocked Ashoka to his core. Rather than pride, he simply felt grief and shame.

Hurling himself deeper into Buddhism, he disavowed violence and began a second phase of leadership known as 'Ashoka Dharma'. He commemorated this transformation in 260 BCE with a public display of piety, inscribing the first of many 'Rock Edicts', pronouncing his conversion to Buddhism. These would later culminate in the Pillar Edicts, inscribed pillars of magnificent polished stone, crowned by lions, bulls and elephants, sat atop the Wheel of Moral Law.

The king sometimes spent three quarters of the year touring the empire, inscribing rock faces in the subcontinent's first written script, Brahmi, which was developed to communicate his mother tongue of Prakrit. This gave him the means to speak directly with every single one of his subjects. In the process he delivered a fascinating array of philosophical, heartfelt musings - unfiltered and

Ashoka was said to have erected 84,000 stupas and monasteries across the subcontinent

THE ORIGINAL MACHIAVELLI

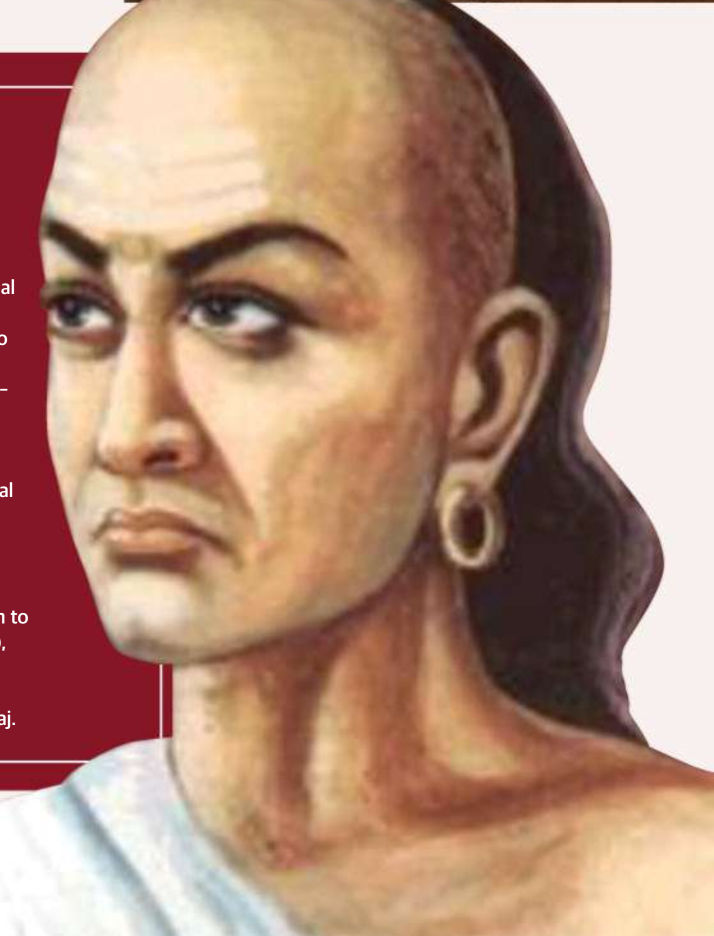
The Mauryan dynasty began with a genius determined to deliver his empire from danger and achieve revenge

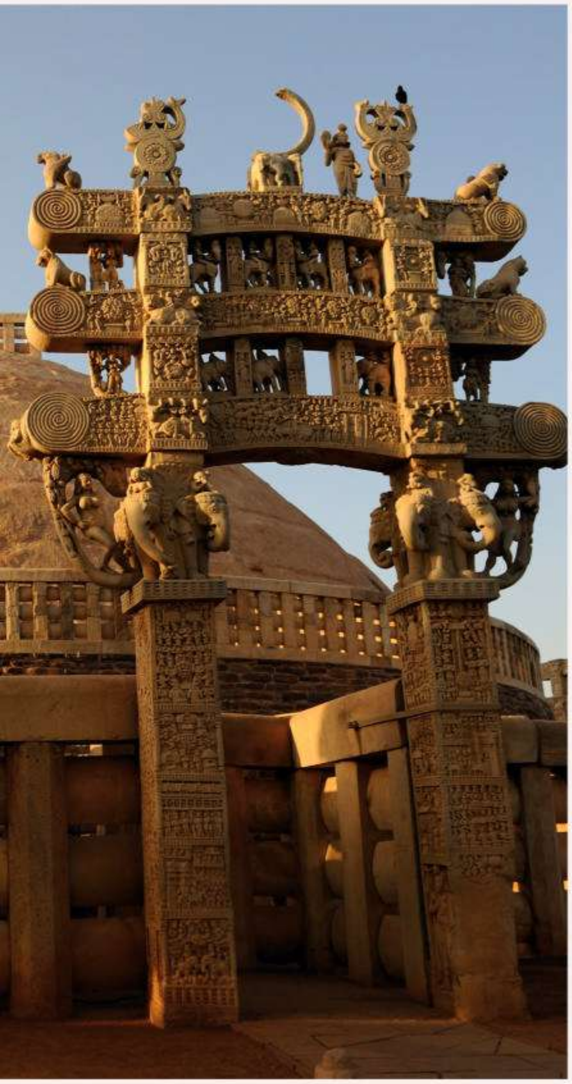
Chanakya was born to a Brahman family in the northwestern province of Taxila, a centre of culture and learning where the finest studied science, economics, law, medicine and warfare.

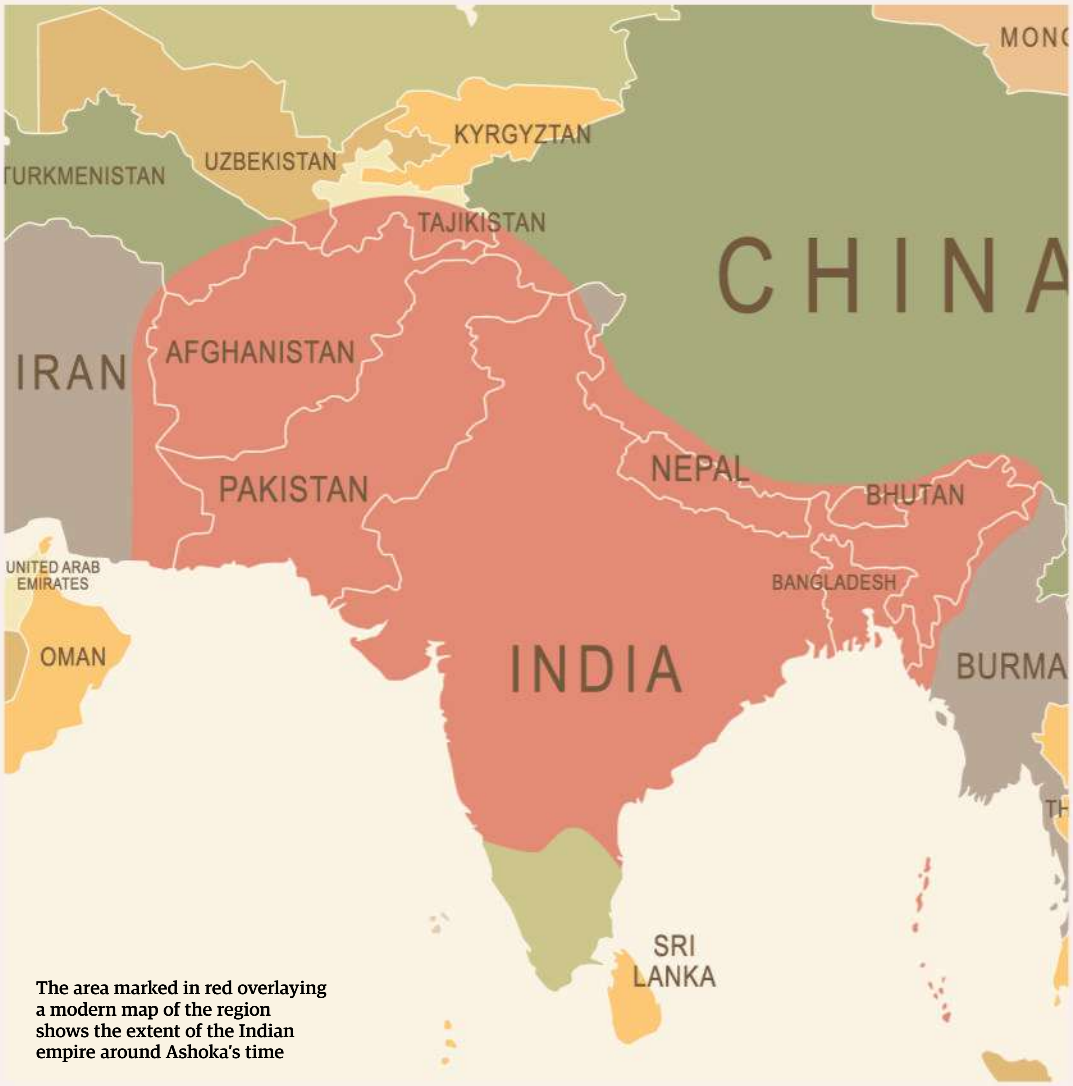
A teacher's son, the genius became a professor himself at a young age, and his study of politics led him to believe that India's Nanda kingdom was in a dangerously vulnerable state. In the event of an invasion, he worried the entire realm would soon collapse. Desperate, he travelled east to the capital of Pataliputra to advise the Nanda king about his fears, only to find him to be a manipulative tyrant. The experiment ended in disaster, with Chanakya fleeing disguised as a Jain ascetic. Eventually he would cross paths with a brash young boy called Chandragupta.

Taking the young lad under his wing, he gave him a holistic education, hoping to mould him into the ideal ruler. As the two amassed financial support, they mounted a direct attack on the Nanda, failing spectacularly. Soon after, the duo watched a mother scold her son for eating the hot centre of a bun rather than the cool edges – prompting a change in strategy.

Shoring up allies in the Himalayas, they attacked the outskirts of the kingdom, slowly carving it up before eventually taking the capital itself and sending the Nanda king fleeing. Thereafter, Chandragupta was appointed king, creating the Maurya dynasty and ruling in the mould of Chanakya's design. Chanakya, nicknamed Kautilya, or 'the Crow Like', went on to pen *Arthashastra* ('Treatise on State Economy'), outlining his theories on statehood, rulership, political economy and international relations – ideas that would survive well into the British Raj.







The area marked in red overlaying a modern map of the region shows the extent of the Indian empire around Ashoka's time

raw, a far cry from the modern politician's sanitised public statement.

One of his rocks directly expressed remorse for the invasion of Kalinga, lamenting: "Peasants who behave with humility towards their friends, servants and labourers are killed in wars and separated from their loved ones." The king added: "This has distressed me considerably. Why should this happen?" He then vowed to eschew thoughts of war and direct all his energies to Dharma going forwards, encouraging future generations to do the same. "The triumph of Dharma is superior to the triumph of war."

As he became consumed by his Buddhist faith, this idea of Dharma would become a leading tenet of his leadership. Curiously, he sought not to enforce the Buddhist notion of Dharma upon the empire but to create a society governed by a universal force of mutual respect and kindness – or as he put it, "All men are my children." It was a system of civic ethics rather than a state religion. In one edict, he denounced the "meaningless rituals" synonymous with Brahmanic worship, instead encouraging people to adopt rituals and customs of "respect for elders" and "treating all living creatures well" – including slaves and labourers.

He insisted that "there should be restraint in preaching one's faith", adding that "a person who praises his own faith and derides the faith of others is actually bringing his faith into disrepute". After all, Buddha himself had said it was behaviour, not birth, that determined whether one was a "priest or an outcast".

While all this served to disgust the Brahman, nothing enraged them so much as his edict denouncing animal sacrifice. In the statement Ashoka even confessed that while his royal kitchens still killed two peacocks and a deer every day to make curry, these too would soon be spared.

During this new phase of governance Ashoka's political administration largely resembled that of his grandfather. His mahamatras travelled across the empire five times a year, making sure neither senior nor lower-ranking officials were abusing their posts. When Ashoka's own brother was caught taking liberties with his vice-regency he was forced to resign and become a Buddhist hermit. Ashoka also had various officials and employees on the payroll, collecting taxes from peasants, artisans and merchants and holding lawbreakers to account. He was firm but fair; not only abolishing the death penalty but offering amnesty on his birthday and the anniversary of his coronation by releasing certain prisoners.

In 254 BCE, the king sent a minister to mediate a dispute between Buddhists and the Nirgrantha, a sect of Jain ascetics who refused to even wear clothes. When the minister was killed, Ashoka called together the Third Buddhist Council at his capital of Pataliputra to streamline the various Buddhist sects and codify what was considered doctrinally correct. He then began a widespread programme of proselytising – sending monks across the region bearing the accepted doctrine.

As he grew older Ashoka became increasingly dedicated to the Sangha, the Buddhist community. He was said to have built 84,000 stupas and monasteries across the realm, one for each of the Buddhist discourses. Rather than mud and plaster, they were built of brick and stone. He supposedly gifted 100,000 gold pieces to every monastery, another 100,000 to the site of Buddha's birth, and a further 100,000 to the Bodhi Tree where Buddha received enlightenment.

The king also revived the magnificent Pancavarsika festival, reimagining it in line with his Buddhist faith. At the end of the proceedings he erected a platform around the Bodhi Tree and

© Getty Images, Alamy

poured milk infused with sandalwood, saffron, camphor and perfume over it from 5,000 gold, silver, crystal and tiger's-eye pitchers.

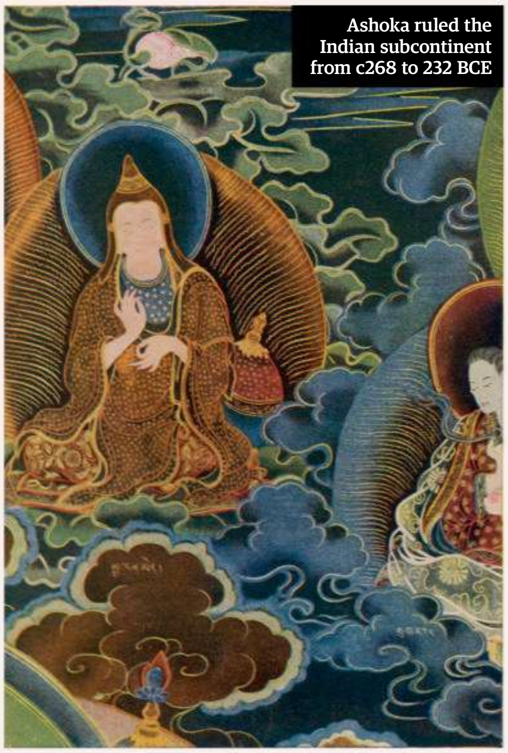
After the king's chief queen and mother of his beloved heir, Kunala, died, her spot was filled by Tishyarakshita, a Machiavellian anti-Buddhist who had supposedly once tried to destroy the Bodhi Tree. Either angered at Kunala for rejecting a sexual advance or simply hoping to elevate her own son, she supposedly doctored one of the king's orders, having his heir blinded while the king was - in an all too predictable predicament - putting down a rebellion in Taxila. When Kunala clawed his way back to the capital the chief minister had the queen killed and her anti-Buddhist conspirators executed or banished to the desert. Now ineligible to rule, Kunala's son Samprati was named heir in his stead.

As Ashoka neared his seventies and his health began to fail he sustained himself by planning a second Pancavarsika festival, one that would far surpass the first, spending 400,000 gold pieces entertaining 400,000 monks and even more for his Ashokarama monastic centre. However, decades of philanthropic spending had virtually bankrupted the empire, and the king's ministers leaned on the young Samprati, who told the treasury to reject Ashoka's request. Denied his dying wish to donate all his remaining worldly goods to the Buddhist community, Ashoka slipped away from rulership, allowing Samprati to act in his name. Ashoka died in 232 BCE, and it's said his body burned for seven days and nights when he was cremated.

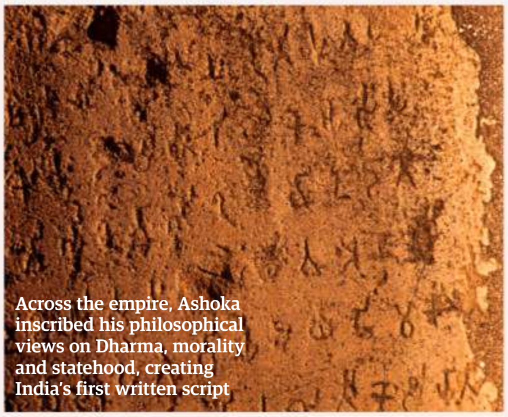
The king's death would be followed by another troubled succession, with a line of short-reigning kings ushering in the dynasty's demise and the return of Brahmanism just half a century later. Though Buddhism would eventually fade from the subcontinent, it informed the future Hindu faith, with Buddha serving as one of Vishnu's avatars. It would also find fertile ground in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet, China and beyond. Of the two symbols that adorned Ashoka's Pillar Edicts, the Bodhi Tree and the Wheel of the Moral Law, the latter has been immortalised on the modern Indian flag.

It is a fitting tribute to a man who not only presided over the largest ever Indian empire for three decades but transformed a minor sect into a major world religion, successfully demonstrating an entirely new model of leadership - one based not on conquest but universal welfare.

> "The king's death would be followed by another troubled succession"



Ashoka ruled the Indian subcontinent from c268 to 232 BCE



Across the empire, Ashoka inscribed his philosophical views on Dharma, morality and statehood, creating India's first written script

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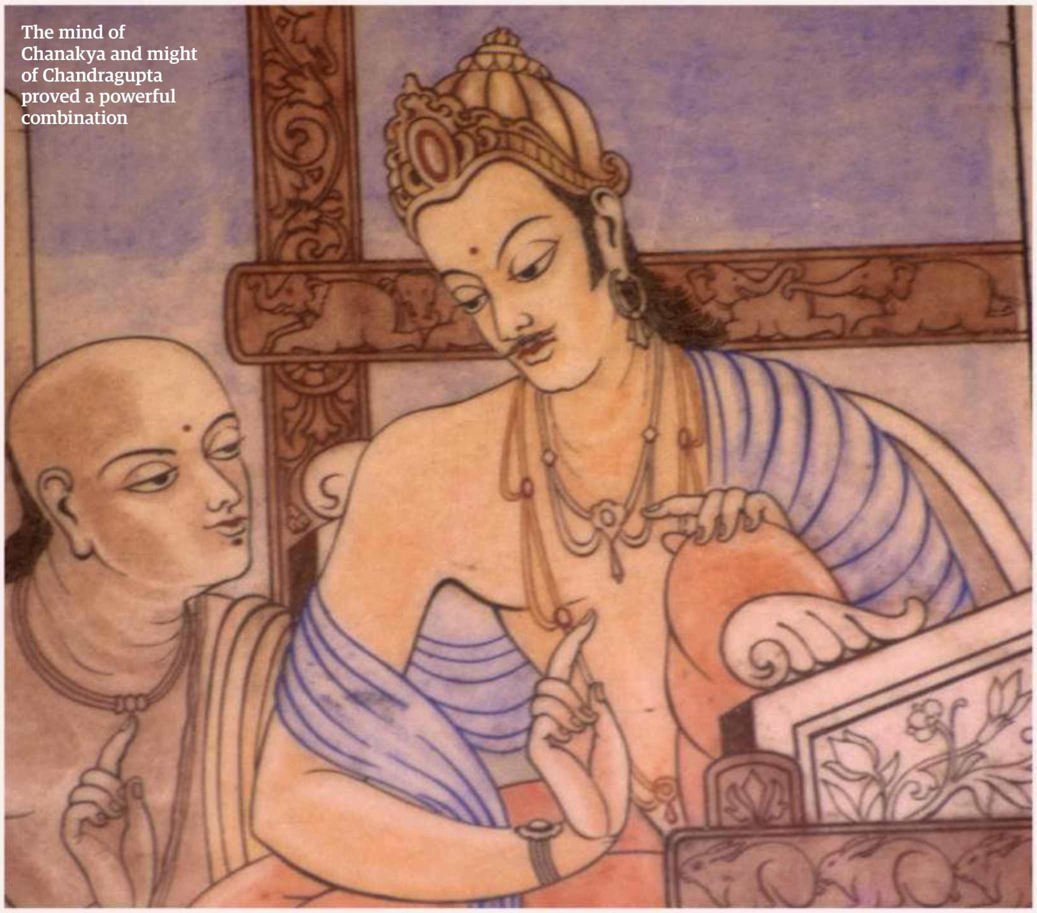
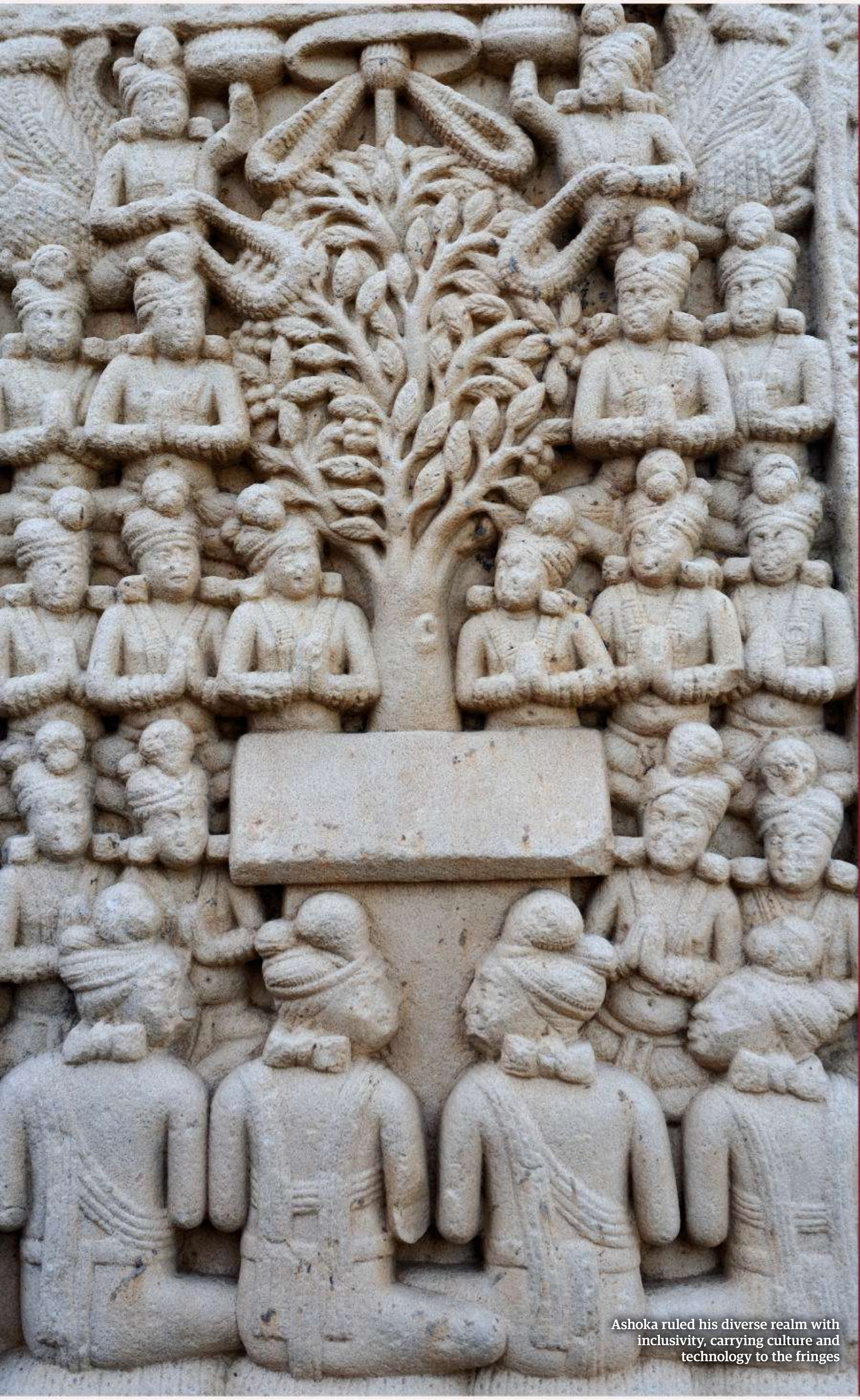
This postage stamp depicts three lions sitting on top of the Wheel of Moral Law



The mind of Chanakya and might of Chandragupta proved a powerful combination



Ashoka ruled his diverse realm with inclusivity, carrying culture and technology to the fringes

THE WIDE REACH OF CIVILISATION

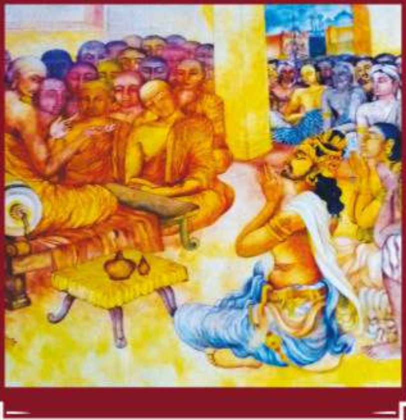
Ashoka's philanthropy blossomed across the fringes of the empire, rolling out remarkable developments

Built along the banks of the Ganges, the Maurya capital of Pataliputra was one of the largest cities in the world, perhaps even larger than Rome, brimming with palaces, factories, shipyards, gardens and temples – all enclosed within enormous walls, with 570 towers and 64 gates.

However, the empire proper was enormous, spanning an incredible array of cultures and landscapes – most of it far less sophisticated than the capital. With large swathes covered in dense forest, littered with backwater villages, one of the king's most influential moves was his introduction of Dharma mahamatras, or superintendents of morals. This new breed of officers were tasked with rolling out the king's vision of Dharma on the ground, maintaining peace between the sects, digging wells, running hospitals and building shade alongside the road.

They were sent to the furthest reaches of the empire, teaching the tribes about Dharma and bringing with them the high culture and technology of the Gangetic Basin, the heart of Maurya power. In the process the peasants were 'civilised', brought into the fold of tax-paying society and instilled with respect for royal authority and Ashoka's monks, officers and priests. The king claimed that through his efforts many hunters and fishermen were converted to agriculturists.

Before long, black-polished pottery, writing, iron tools and spoked wheels were carried to the distant provinces. Burnt bricks would emerge for the first time in northeast India, a material that could withstand heavy rain (a frequent occurrence) and therefore allow settlements to be built where mud shacks previously could not. Ring wells, meanwhile, allowed people to live further and further from the river banks. Having communicated his philosophies to the rulers of Greece, Egypt, Turkey and Sri Lanka, the king even offered medical support to neighbouring countries.



© Getty Images

Nalanda, founded by the Guptas, was one of the ancient world's greatest centres of learning

GOLDEN AGE OF THE GUPTAS

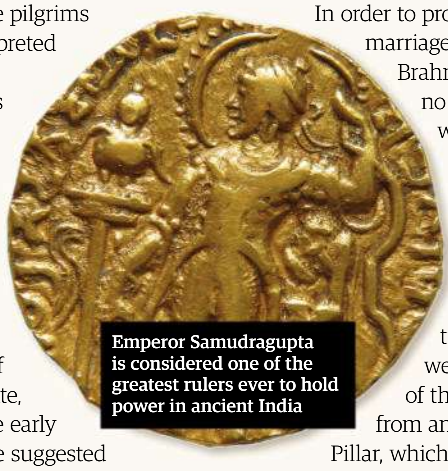
For three centuries, India was ruled by enlightened monarchs who presided over an age of growth and progress

Written by Catherine Curzon

In the mid-3rd century CE, the Gupta Empire began. Though initially humble, from unremarkable roots the empire flourished into one of the greatest dynasties India has ever seen. This seventh ruling dynasty of the Kingdom of Magadha became the most prosperous in the history of ancient India and endured until the mid-6th century CE. Under its rule the empire spread beyond the borders of India and into Afghanistan, and with territorial expansion came immense cultural, scientific and financial growth, as well as richly rewarding trade routes, valuable dynastic marriages and consummate empire building. Among the many rulers of the house of Gupta were some of the most important kings in the history of the subcontinent. Of course, the empire couldn't and didn't retain supremacy forever, but for a time it was considered by some to truly encompass the Golden Age of India.

The true origins of the Gupta Empire are unknown and lost to ancient history, but there are a number of theories regarding the early days of the dynasty. Though even the Gupta homeland is unknown, scholars have pointed to the discovery, in what is now the Lower Doab region of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, of inscriptions and treasure hoards that refer to Gupta rulers. In addition to this circumstantial archaeological evidence, the Puranas, ancient Hindu writings, make reference to early Gupta territory in the Ganges Basin, lending further weight to the theory that Bihar and Uttar Pradesh was potentially their homeland.

A second theory, however, posits that the empire was actually born in the Ganges Basin in what is now modern Bengal. In the 7th century, Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing wrote of the construction of a temple for use by Chinese pilgrims by a ruler who has been interpreted by some as the founder of the Gupta dynasty, Sri Gupta. This temple was situated in the modern Bengal region. Still other theories propose that the early dynasty stretched from Prayaga to Bengal, and debates continue regarding which of these theories is most likely.



Emperor Samudragupta is considered one of the greatest rulers ever to hold power in ancient India

Just as the place of origin of the empire is a matter of debate, so too is the social class of the early dynasty. Some historians have suggested that they were of the third varna, or third social class, which is the second lowest. This varna, composed of Vaishyas, is often associated with the name Gupta and is traditionally one of tradesmen, farmers and merchants. Some historians have interpreted this to mean that the early Guptas may have been merchants who gained power and influence by opposing the policies of oppressive rulers and ultimately supplanting them. However, opposing scholars have pointed out that the name Gupta is not solely reserved for the Vaishya class and that, given their eventual position, it is far more likely the Guptas were members of the Brahmin varna, which is the highest social class. In order to prove this they point to dynastic marriages the Guptas made with other Brahmin families. To date, there is no conclusive proof to suggest which, if any, of these theories is definitive.

The founder of the empire was Sri Gupta, who was born in the late 3rd century CE. Sri was not a given name, however, but an honorific title denoting a person of wealth. What little is known of the reign of Sri Gupta comes from an inscription on the Allahabad Pillar, which was initially erected in the 3rd century BCE. A century later, Gupta emperor Samudragupta added an inscription that celebrated his own victories and specifically acknowledged him as the great-grandson of Gupta, the founder of the empire. Little else is known of the man who founded the dynasty other than the possibility that he was also behind the construction of the Buddhist temple written about by the monk Yijing.

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Gupta's successor and son, Ghatotkacha, likewise left no inscriptions from his own time. Once again, the earliest mention of him can be found in the inscription left on the Allahabad Pillar by his grandson. In this inscription, both Gupta and Ghatotkacha are referred to as maharaja, meaning 'great king'.

Under its first two rulers, the Gupta dynasty presided over a modest realm, but that changed with the reign of Chandragupta I. While his predecessors were memorialised on the Allahabad Pillar as Maharaja, Chandragupta is notably commemorated as Mahārājadhirāja, or 'Great king of kings'. How this early 4th-century ruler turned the kingdom into an empire and became the first Gupta emperor is uncertain; indeed, even the exact period of his reign is not truly known. However, what is known is that Chandragupta married Princess Kumaradevi, a daughter of the powerful Licchavi dynasty. Which kingdom she came from is not known, but this marriage is likely to have played a significant part in his rise. Coins have been discovered bearing the images of the couple, suggesting that the empress was an important factor in the increasing fortunes of the Guptas.

Chandragupta was succeeded as emperor by his son, Samudragupta, around 335 CE, who would rule until c.375 CE. Continuing the work his father had started, Samudragupta expanded the Gupta Empire immensely. He conquered surrounding regions and subjugated dozens of kings, advancing through the land in all directions. So great was his might and so strong his armies that foreign kings sought Samudragupta's favour by making pilgrimages to meet him, offering him the hands of their daughters in marriage and paying tribute to him. He also enjoyed tribute from the kings of territories he had yet to conquer, no doubt in the hope that they could become allies rather than see their lands absorbed into the mighty Gupta Empire. The Allahabad Pillar lists the names of a dozen kings who were captured by Samudragupta, all of whom he released and reinstated, though they were now under his dominion.

Yet Samudragupta was not solely a conqueror at the head of an advancing army. In fact, he was also a cultural leader and accomplished musician, composing poetry and entertaining courtiers with his mastery of musical instruments. He was also recognised and respected by his subjects for his compassion in governing and his willingness to show mercy to those rulers he had conquered. Though he expanded his realm, he continued to look not only at the bigger picture but at the people who lived under his rule. Well-liked by his subjects, he took a special interest in the poor, and the Allahabad Pillar inscription memorialises him as a philanthropic ruler who maintained a concern for the less fortunate and put measures in place to help those who were in debt.

Remnants of the Gupta Empire are still standing today, such as the Iron Pillar in Delhi, India

The Eran boar's inscription celebrates the conquering Huns, who carved into the Gupta Empire

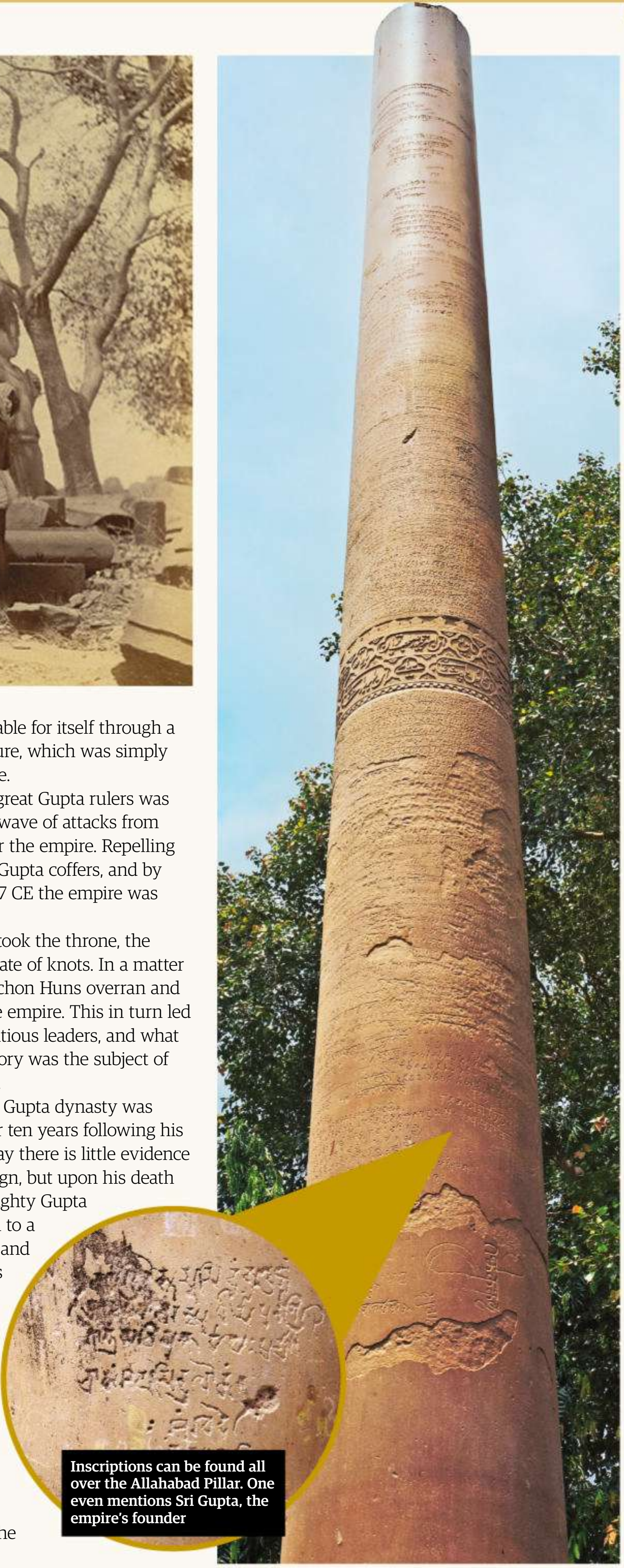
Samudragupta remained undefeated in battle at the time of his death and is regarded today as one of India's greatest rulers. His son and successor, Chandragupta II, continued his expansionist policies, shrewdly combining military conquest and dynastic marriage to guide the Gupta dynasty to its peak. Conquering dozens of territories, Chandragupta II controlled enormous swathes of India that expanded all the way to the Himalayas. Chandragupta II's reign was noted for its peace and prosperity as well as the flourishing of Hindu culture, from art to literature, science and music. With religious tolerance a key part of his reign, Chandragupta II's era saw a strong bond between Hinduism and Buddhism flourish, and Buddhist art and iconography proved influential on Gupta art. The court was also noted for the Navaratna (nine gems), nine scholars whose verse became legendary in the Gupta era.

Although Kumaragupta inherited a vast and powerful empire upon his succession in c.415 CE, little is known of his own military activities, though coins have been found that suggest he continued expanding his realm. Kumaragupta put in place a system of government that ensured his geographically enormous empire would be ruled efficiently. This relied on an *uparika* (governor) who would be responsible for a *bhukti* (province), which would in turn be broken down into districts known as *vishaya*, each of which would be administered by a magistrate, or *vishyapati*. The vishyapatis would be supported by a council of advisors made up of a mayor and the respective heads of the merchant, artisan and scribes' guilds. By administering the empire as a business, complete with a hierarchy of management, Kumaragupta ensured that each province would be answerable for itself through a clear administrative structure, which was simply replicated across the empire.

Arguably the last of the great Gupta rulers was Skandagupta, who faced a wave of attacks from tribes who hoped to shatter the empire. Repelling these assaults drained the Gupta coffers, and by the time of his death in 467 CE the empire was crumbling fast.

As successive emperors took the throne, the Gupta Empire shrank at a rate of knots. In a matter of decades the nomadic Alchon Huns overran and conquered vast parts of the empire. This in turn led to war between other ambitious leaders, and what had once been Gupta territory was the subject of fierce battles and upheaval.

The final emperor of the Gupta dynasty was Vishnugupta, who ruled for ten years following his accession in c.540 CE. Today there is little evidence on record of his life and reign, but upon his death the Sun set on the once mighty Gupta Empire. Its lands had fallen to a collection of smaller rulers and its wealthy trade scene was in tatters, as Hun invasions disrupted lucrative routes and relationships. Centres of learning lay in ruins, and the Buddhists, who had been welcomed into the Gupta Empire, were slaughtered by the marauding Huns, their temples and monasteries razed. The Golden Age of the Guptas was over.


Inscriptions can be found all over the Allahabad Pillar. One even mentions Sri Gupta, the empire's founder

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JEWELS OF INDIA

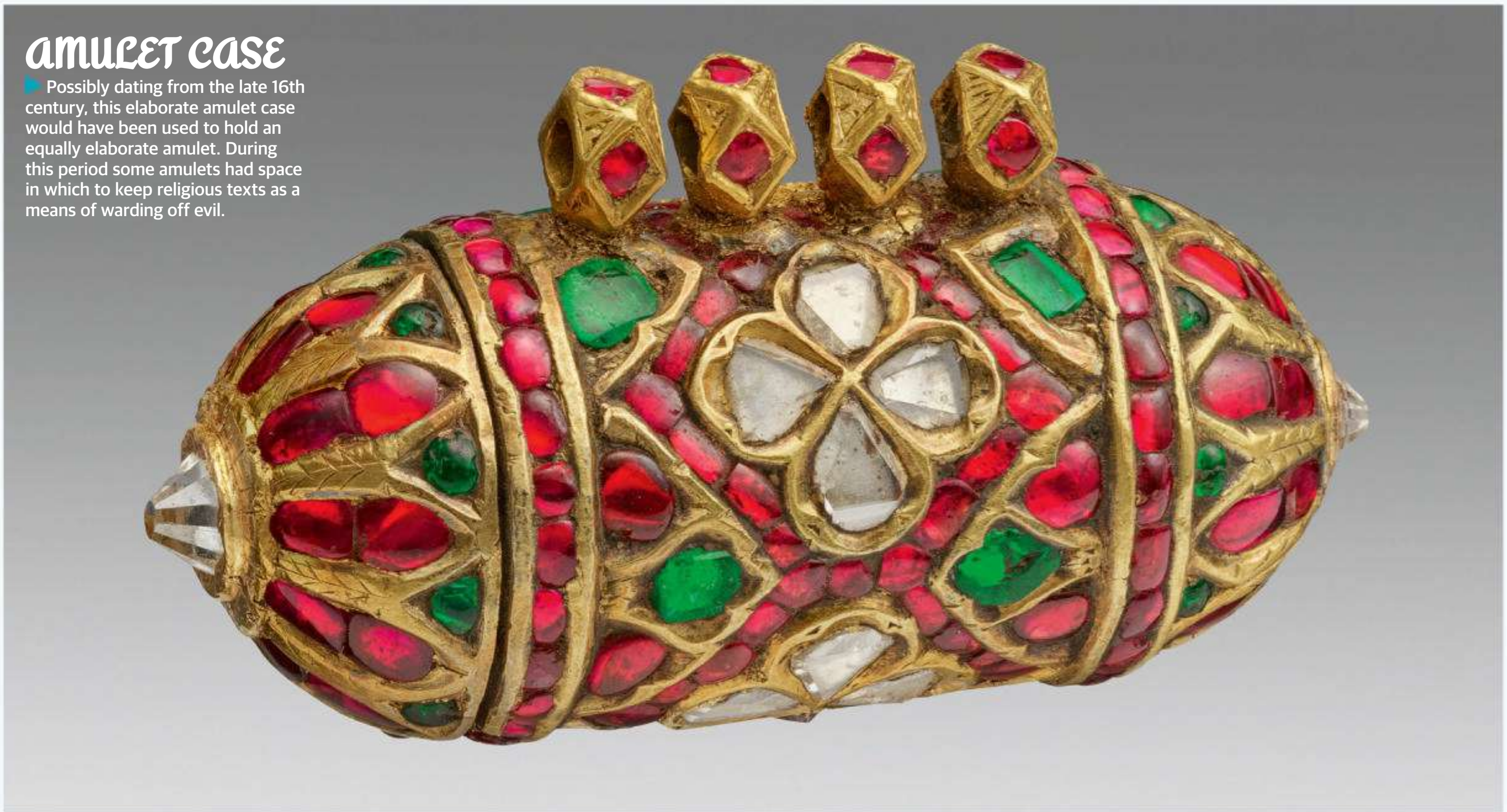
Take a look inside the book that showcases the magnificence and artistry of jewelled luxury objects from India's past

In collaboration with the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait, a 2023 publication from Thames & Hudson spectacularly highlights the glory and grandeur of historic Indian jewellery and other bejewelled objects.

Salam Kaoukji, an author and curator, guides us through a world of beauty and extravagance in a selection of over 300 objects from the 16th and 17th centuries. All were made during the rule of the Mughal Empire and Deccan sultanates (the latter was founded in 1527 and conquered by the Mughals) and showcase a range of craftsmanship. As Kaoukji points out in the introduction to *Adornment and Splendour: Jewels of the Indian Courts*, the collection on display is "widely recognised as the most significant in the world".

The collection itself was brought together by former deputy prime minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser and his wife, Sheikha Hussa al-Sabah, in order to demonstrate the variety of artistic uses of jewels from India. Among the jewels captured within the book are examples of gemstone carvings, enamelling and inscriptions on jewels, highlighting the skill and creativity of the Indian artists who produced them for their patrons.

Also included are several objects that have never been included in a publication before.

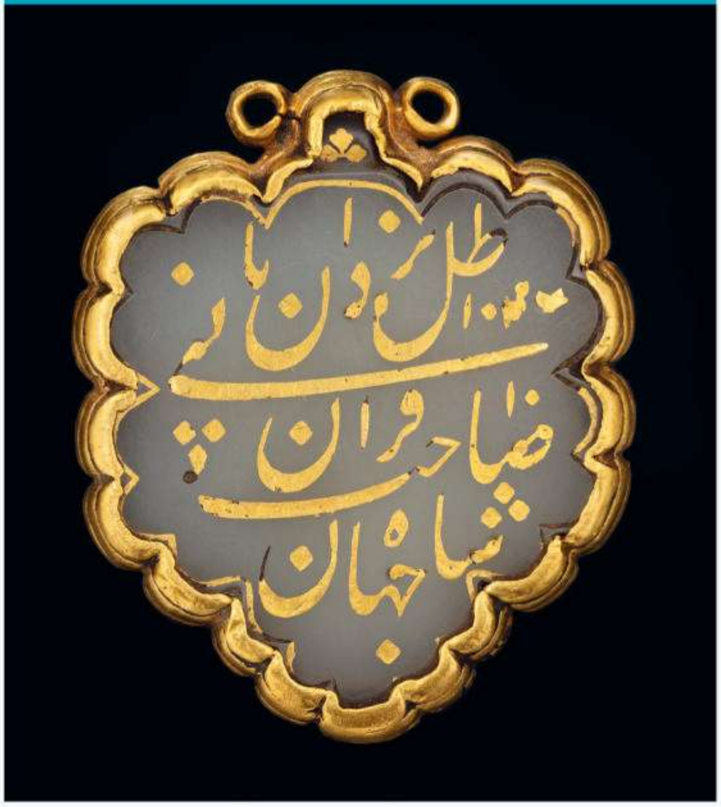


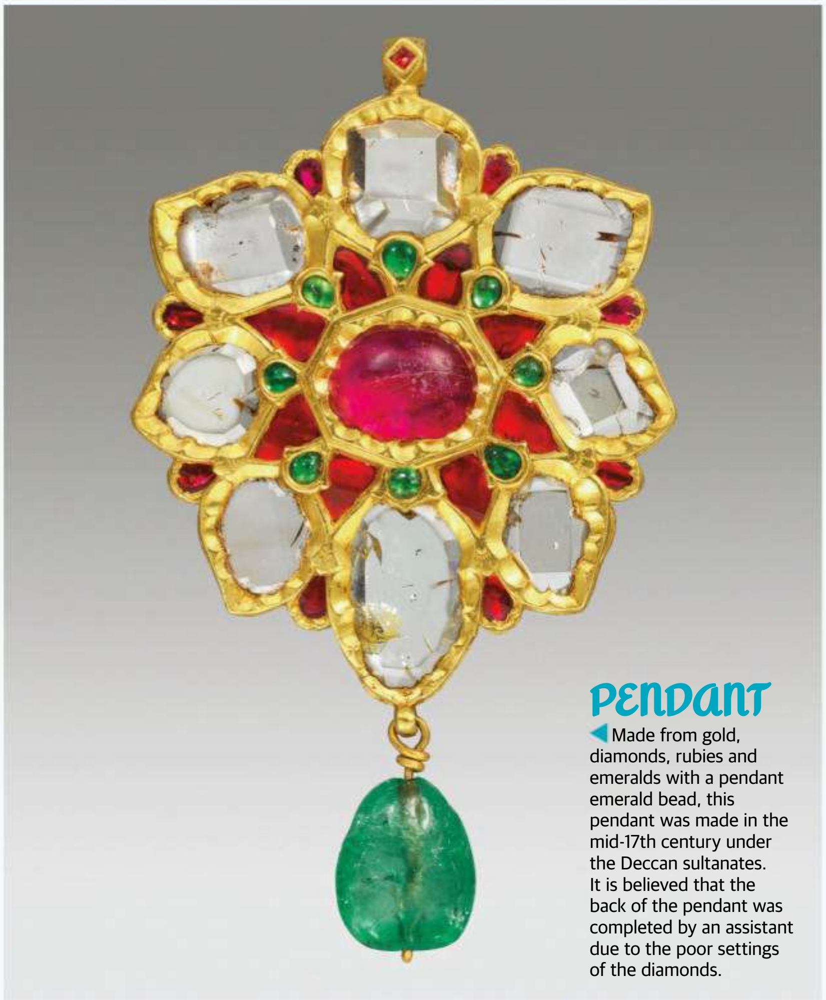
AMULET CASE

Possibly dating from the late 16th century, this elaborate amulet case would have been used to hold an equally elaborate amulet. During this period some amulets had space in which to keep religious texts as a means of warding off evil.

PENDANT IN NAME OF SHAH JAHAN

Made from grey nephrite jade and inlaid with gold, this pendant is inscribed in the name of Emperor Shah Jahan (ruled 1628-1658). The inscription begins on one side of the pendant and continues on the other side.

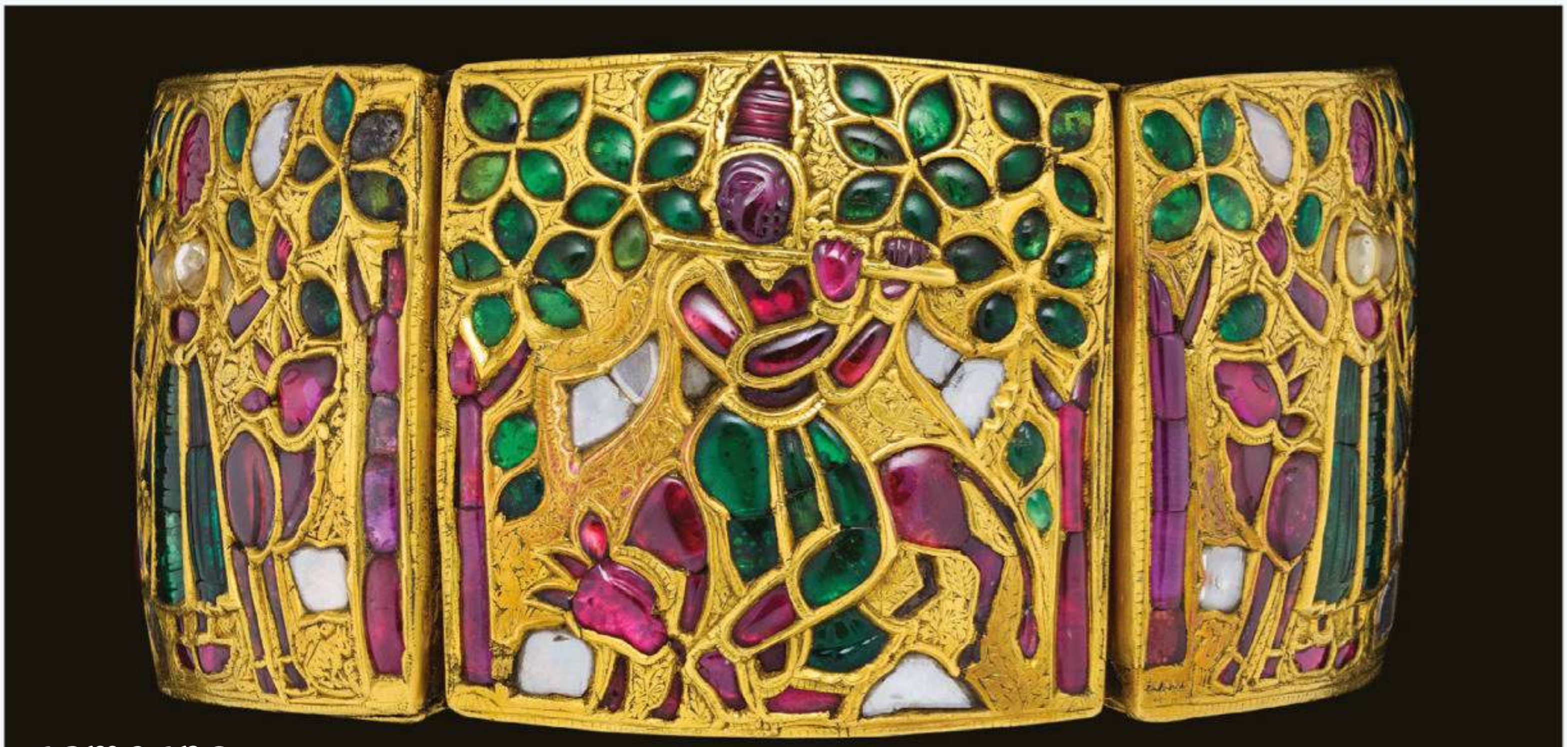




PENDANT

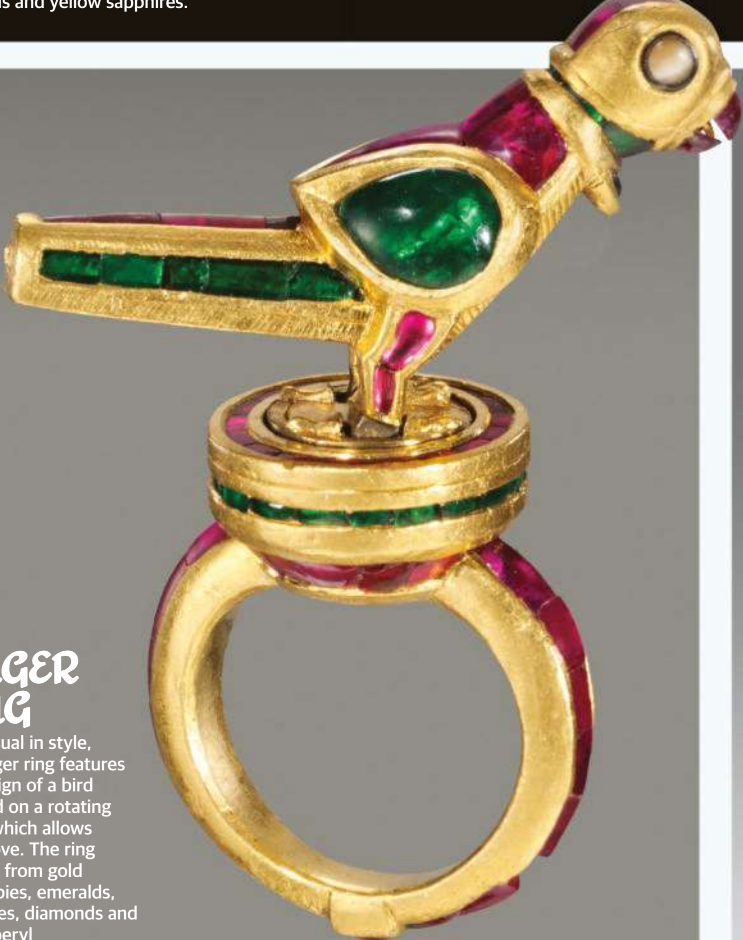
Made from gold, diamonds, rubies and emeralds with a pendant emerald bead, this pendant was made in the mid-17th century under the Deccan sultanates. It is believed that the back of the pendant was completed by an assistant due to the poor settings of the diamonds.

All images: © The al-Sabah Collection



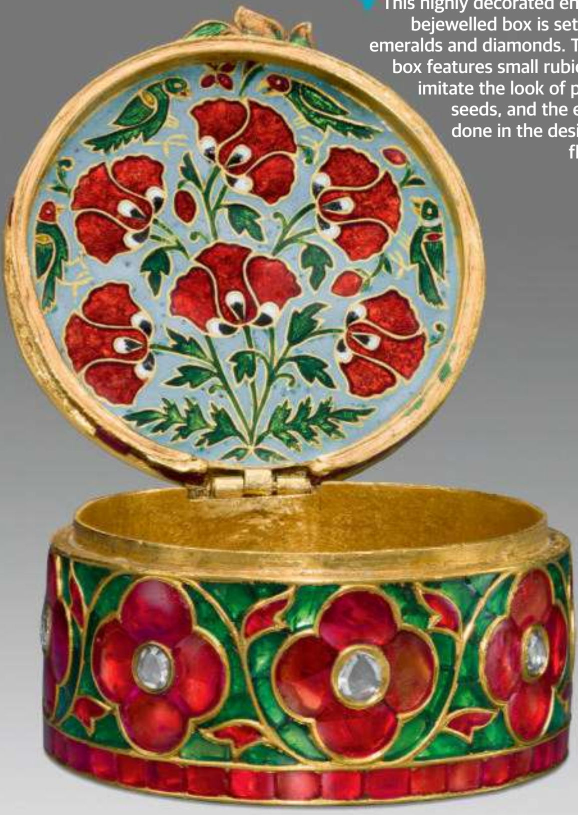
ARMBAND

▲ This stunning armband dates from the early 17th century and is set using the kundan technique. It is made from gold, with the intricate design made from rubies, diamonds, emeralds and yellow sapphires.



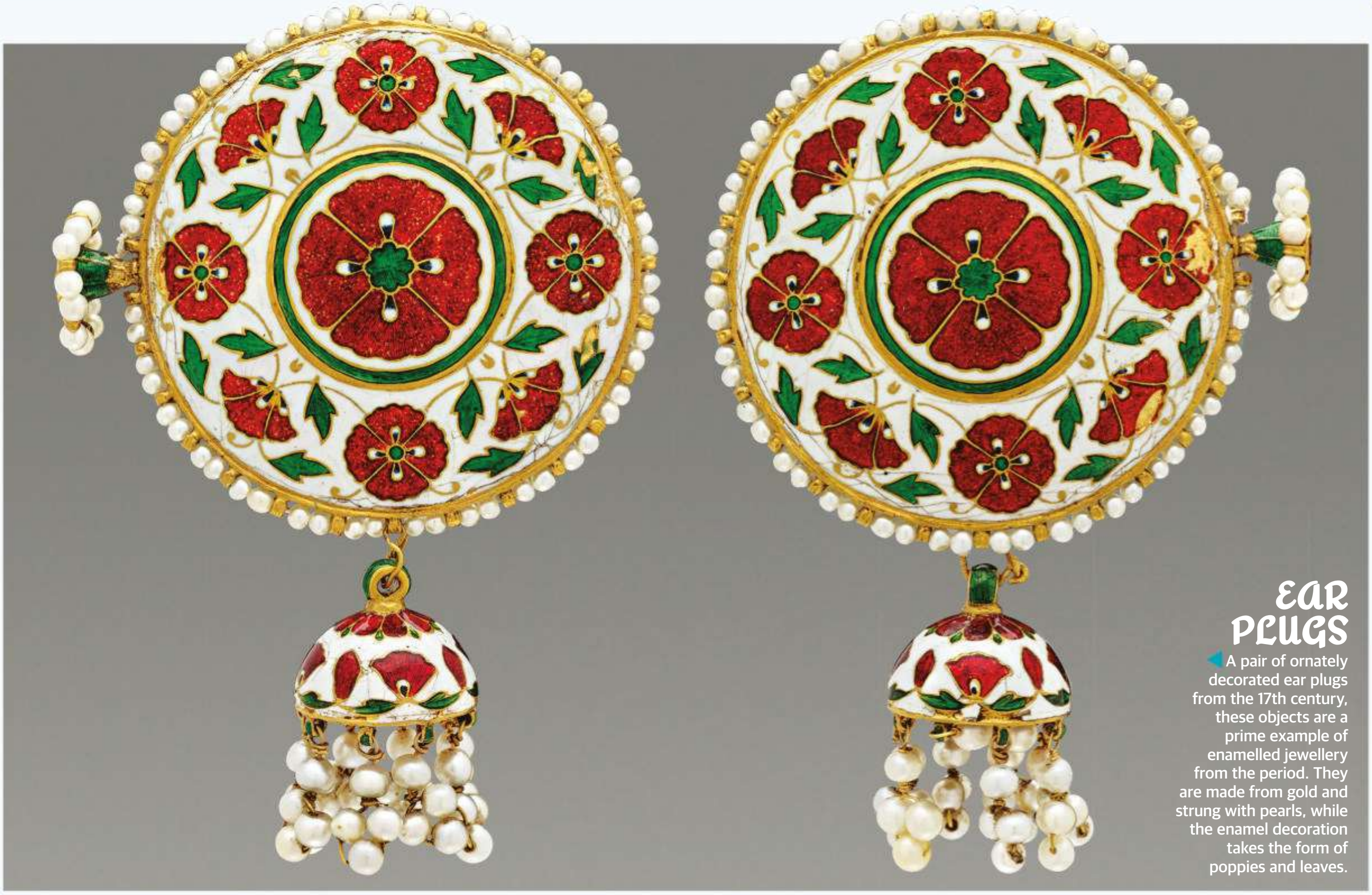
FINGER RING

▶ Unusual in style, this finger ring features the design of a bird perched on a rotating bezel, which allows it to move. The ring is made from gold with rubies, emeralds, sapphires, diamonds and chrysoberyl cat's eyes.



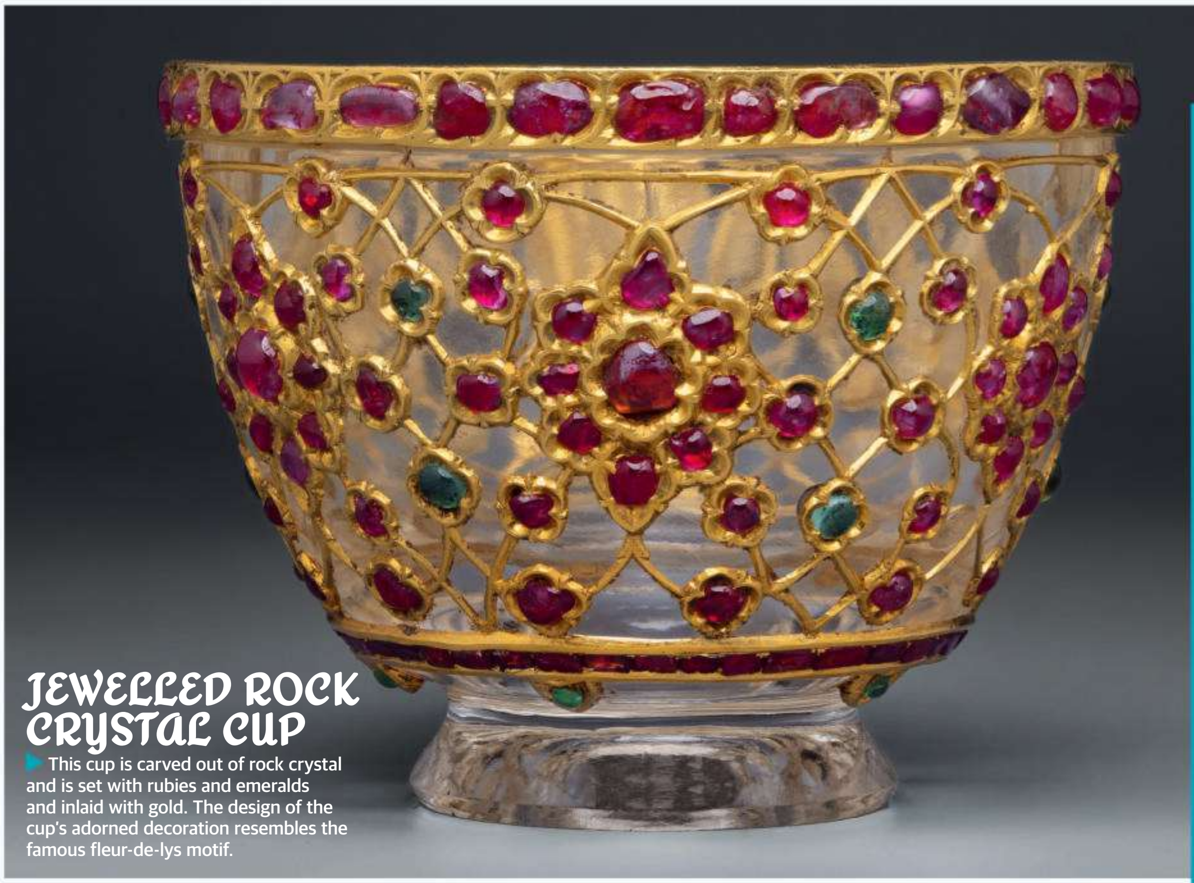
ENAMELLED BOX

▼ This highly decorated enamelled and bejewelled box is set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. The lid of the box features small rubies aligned to imitate the look of pomegranate seeds, and the enamelling is done in the design of poppy flower heads.



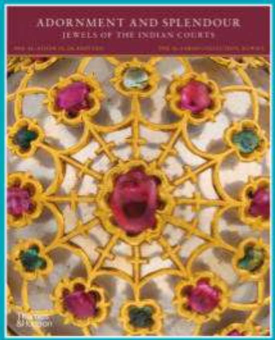
EAR PLUGS

A pair of ornately decorated ear plugs from the 17th century, these objects are a prime example of enamelled jewellery from the period. They are made from gold and strung with pearls, while the enamel decoration takes the form of poppies and leaves.



JEWELLED ROCK CRYSTAL CUP

This cup is carved out of rock crystal and is set with rubies and emeralds and inlaid with gold. The design of the cup's adorned decoration resembles the famous fleur-de-lys motif.



ADORNMENT AND SPLENDOUR
JEWELS OF THE INDIAN COURTS

Adornment and Splendour: Jewels of the Indian Courts

(Thames & Hudson, 2023) by Salam Kaoukji is available to buy online.

All images: © The al-Sabah Collection

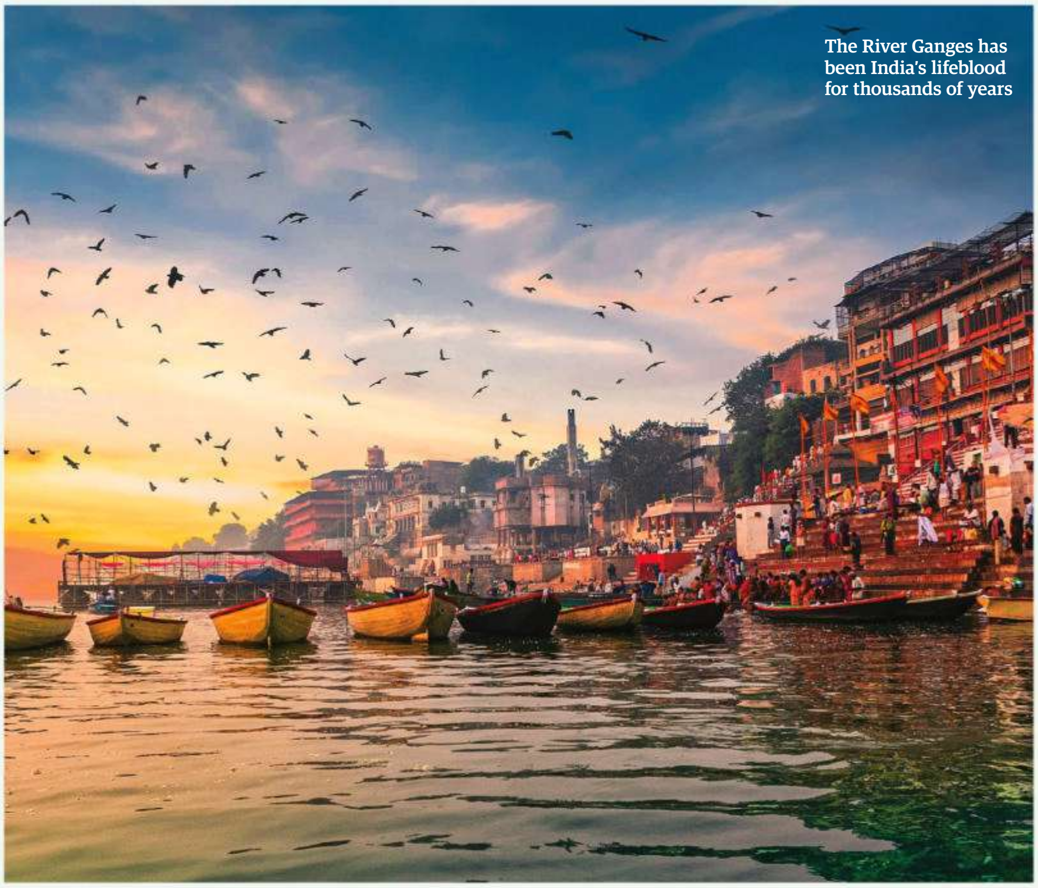
SACRED RIVER, HOLY MOUNTAINS

From the marble gorge of Bhedaghat to the Ganges' great wildlife, India's natural wonders astound

Written by Ailsa Harvey

India's 3.29 million square kilometres (1.27 million square miles) unfolds landscapes of unparalleled diversity. The country is sculpted by snow-capped mountains, carved by vibrant rainforest valleys, embellished with captivating coral reefs and swarming with graceful creatures, from the striking Bengal tiger to the elusive Indian elephant, symbolising strength, wisdom and prosperity. India certainly has a wealth of natural wonders bejewelling its landscape.

At the north of the country, closely hugging the India-Nepal border, the sacred Ganges River flows. Traversing 2,500 kilometres (1,553 miles), this river basin is the most populated in the world, shaping some of the earliest civilisations and sustaining hundreds of millions of people today. The river's fertile plains provided an ideal settlement area for early humans to flourish and create communities. It also supplied a transport route for trade, enabling civilisations to further expand. Today, the Ganges is still central to quality of life for many Indians. In the Hindu religion, some consider life to be incomplete without bathing in the Ganges' flowing waters at least once. People will travel as far as necessary to reach the sacred river, with some gathering the water in copper cups ready to drink at the end of life. This Hindu tradition involves incorporating the river water with a person's last breath, as it is believed this grants a person's soul access to heaven.



The River Ganges has been India's lifeblood for thousands of years

Getty Images

Gracing the Ganges' shores and current are an array of animals. One that performs a skilful display is the Ganges river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*). This is one of the oldest dolphin species in the world, which has adapted to freshwater conditions. It reflects sound waves off its surroundings in a technique called echolocation in order to hunt blind in the muddy waters. This animal is a top predator in the Ganges, and so its population is used as an indication of the sacred river's health. The tens of thousands that once frolicked in the flowing waters have been whittled down to fewer than 2,000, sparking a movement to care for the biodiversity of the holy river.

North of the Ganges lies both the top of India and the top of the entire world. The Himalayan mountain range is the world's highest, with the mountains within the Indian border soaring to an ultimate peak of 8,586 metres (28,169 feet) above sea level, at the top of Kanchenjunga mountain. This is the summit of India and the third-highest point on the globe. Alongside the tallest mountain are four other main peaks. This range is known as the Five Treasures of Snow and represents gold (wealth and prosperity), silver (resilience and purity), gems (spiritual wisdom), grain (food and fertility) and holy books (knowledge and enlightenment). To the local people these treasures together symbolise balance in life and truly represent the grand and essential.

Roaming the Five Treasures is a sixth: India's snow leopards. Over 700 of these felines call India home and make up ten to 15 per cent of the world's snow leopard population. The leopards are India's mountain acrobats, with effortless agility, strength and balance that enables them to navigate vertiginous drops, helped by their sturdy metre-long tails.

LOWER ALTITUDE, HIGHER DIVERSITY

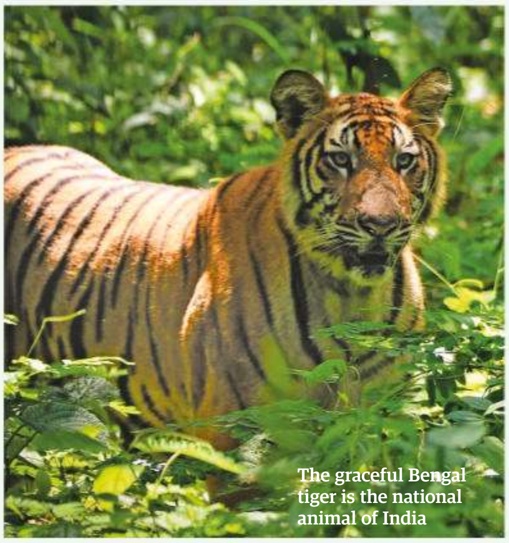
Taking a leap down from the icy heights into the flora-filled basins, there is a vibrant alpine flower assortment. The state of Uttarakhand is home to the Valley of the Flowers with bursts of blooming wildflowers. This region is carpeted in the colours of over 600 flower species including orchids, poppies, primulas, marigolds and daisies. Some of the rarer features in this natural decor are the striking blue poppy, yellow saxaul and red spider lily. The Govan's corydalis is a flower native to this valley and the surrounding high-altitude Himalayan regions. Its delicate tubular appearance is deceptive, as the Indian-grown vision is far from fragile. It has adapted to the perilous conditions, earning frost resistance and water-storing roots in order to survive fluctuating moisture levels. The narrow opening of each flower, produced by the protruding petals, attracts the most efficient pollinators. When entering the narrow tunnel, space is limited and pollinators are more likely to make contact with the reproductive parts of the flower to keep the mountain-top marvel thriving.

CARVED MARBLE CLIFFS

The next wonder is a marble masterpiece, carved over millions of years along the Narmada River of Bhedaghat, Madhya Pradesh. Over time this river has eroded a path into the marble, increasing the height of the towering white cliffs that have emerged and surround the glistening gorge.

Mixed into the white cliff faces are natural marble hues, presented as if painted onto the rocky canvas. The reflective marble, combined with the gentle river and seeping daylight, create an ethereal setting for a boat ride.

Three of Kanchenjunga's peaks are in India


The graceful Bengal tiger is the national animal of India

Away from the tranquil trickle of the marble gorge's waters, the Dudhsagar Falls presents more of a cascading chaos. These falls are located in southwest India in Goa. Falling from a height of 603 metres (1,978 feet), the name of the mighty feature aptly translates as 'sea of milk' in the Konkani language, referencing the foaming froth that splatters down the jagged, four-tiered drop. In October, soon after monsoon season, this waterfall is replenished and at its most impressive for viewing. Surrounding the continuous tap is the evergreen forest of the Western Ghats, a mountain range that runs along the west coast.

The healthy overgrowth and its gushing water source is a haven for flora, including those with medicinal properties. The Western Ghats contain native medicinal plants, including stress-relieving ashwagandha, anti-inflammatory turmeric, memory-assisting brahmi and skin-healing Indian pennywort. Complementing the Western Ghats' beauty, these biological benefits have been used in Ayurvedic medicine for many centuries.

ROOTS MADE FOR WALKING

The next natural wonder of India demonstrates how plant life can be navigated by humans, and, in this case, fully support our ventures. In the far east region of the country, near a town called Cherrapunji in Meghalaya, are living root bridges.

Here, the Indian rubber tree species *Ficus elastica* is prepared to put down new roots - literally. The tree grows a second set of roots, higher up the trunk. This means that, when needed, it can take hold higher up river banks or in rivers. Two tribes of Meghalaya - War-Khasis and War-Jaintias - learned how to manipulate these fast-growing features to their advantage. By twisting and bending the roots, they guided them across rivers or great drops in the dense jungle to grow their own natural bridges. In doing so, local people have created natural architecture to connect their remote villages to agricultural areas. This is not a quick fix, though. The bridges, which can hold the weight of an adult human, are the result of 15 to 30 years of skill and patience. During this time the roots thicken and provide sturdy structures. Similarly, some roots have grown upwards, emerging as natural ladders to traverse sheer cliff faces. This natural engineering marvel showcases how human ingenuity and natural forces can combine in a harmonious result.

SURREAL SALT DESERT

The Great Rann of Kutch in the Gujarat region covers over 7,500 square kilometres (2,895 square miles) and is one of the world's largest salt deserts. The vast plains of salt form a unique, desolate yet dazzling vision. Facing intense heat and minimal rainfall in this arid and challenging environment, little life thrives here. Yet some species make it work. The saline soil loses all its water to evaporation following the monsoon season when it temporarily floods. As it dries up it leaves behind the desert's thick, white salt crust.

The few extreme plants that survive in this salty expanse are called halophytes, meaning salt-tolerant. Of these, many are endemic to or mostly associated with India. The desert cotton plant, for example, is covered in fluffy silvery-grey foliage and is primarily found in the Rann of Kutch. Beneath the salt plains this plant's root system is extensive, reaching further below the dry, salty surface and accessing less salty groundwater. The hairy leaves also help to reduce water loss from the plant. Other plants, like the mangrove grass, have developed specialised glands on their leaves that work to excrete any excess salt that enters it.

Upon the salt plains roam some of India's marvellous mammals and breathtaking birds. During the monsoon season, exuberant pastel pink flamingos flock to the Rann. This region is the only area in Asia where the lesser flamingo species breed, due to the shallow waters being packed with blue-green algae for them to feed on and the spacious landscape providing minimal disturbance at a crucial point of the life cycle. One section of the Rann, called Pachchham Island, has gained the nickname Flamingo City due to the thousands that flock there.

The iconic great Indian bustard populates some of the grasslands surrounding the Great Rann of Kutch. This large bird is one of India's most fascinating and is among the heaviest flying birds in the world, standing up to 1.2 metres (3.9 feet) tall and weighing up to 15 kilograms (33 pounds). Its courtship display is perhaps its most magnificent feature. To attract female attention, the male birds inflate their throat sacs and tilt their heads backwards to meet their fanned tail plumage. As they hold this bold posture they release a deep, booming mating call.

KINGS OF THE JUNGLE

Alongside the country's human population of 1.4 billion, lives more than 92,000 fauna species. India's national bird is the peacock, symbolising strength and power. Its complex, iridescent feather display symbolises immortality and the expelling of evil. Meanwhile, the resilient Indian rhino is widespread across northern India and demonstrates how species can return from near extinction. These brilliant beasts can charge at 48 kilometres (30 miles) per hour and find each other in the wild by sniffing out their individual scents.

In the hot and humid forest and wetlands the Bengal tiger roams, clad in its iconic orange coat, and located only in the Gir Forest of Gujarat is the Asiatic lion, once India's national animal. The population of these lions has almost doubled in the last 40 years as the country strives to replenish their numbers. Other distinctive sights include the native vibrant Gooty tarantula, the only blue member of the tarantula genus *Poecilotheria*. This quick mover lives in the forests of Andhra Pradesh.

For more unique animal traits, venture away from the mainland to the isolated Nicobar islands of India, where the native Nicobar megapode bird masters its tactical reproductive strategy. First, it builds mounds of sandy soil several metres in diameter before placing its eggs in these natural incubators that use geothermal activity to keep the eggs warm. India's fascinating fauna and diverse flora make it worth visiting alone.

SPOOKS OR SCIENCE?

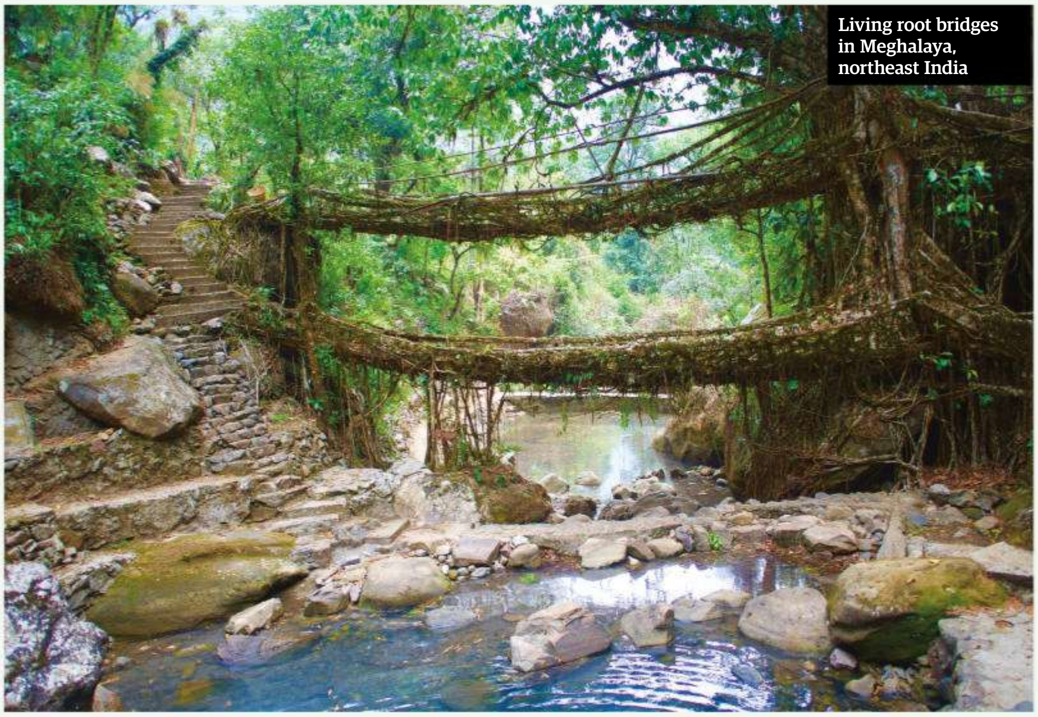
Bengal's marshlands may reveal a luminescent spectacle

Located in the world's largest river delta, Bengal has an abundance of wetlands and is characterised by its mangrove forests, tangling swampland roots and diverse ecosystems. One of Bengal's more peculiar features, which have both mesmerised and disconcerted onlookers for centuries, are the Aleya lights.

After nightfall, bright blasts of luminescence emerge above the waters, flickering and floating over the murky marsh. Their sudden emergence, followed by dashing movements and flickers, have led many people to believe they are visiting spirits. Bengali folklore describes the Aleya lights as the souls from the past, which people should be wary of. Local fishermen have tales to tell of incidents where these lights have guided people into danger, confusing their minds and triggering drownings and other tragedies.

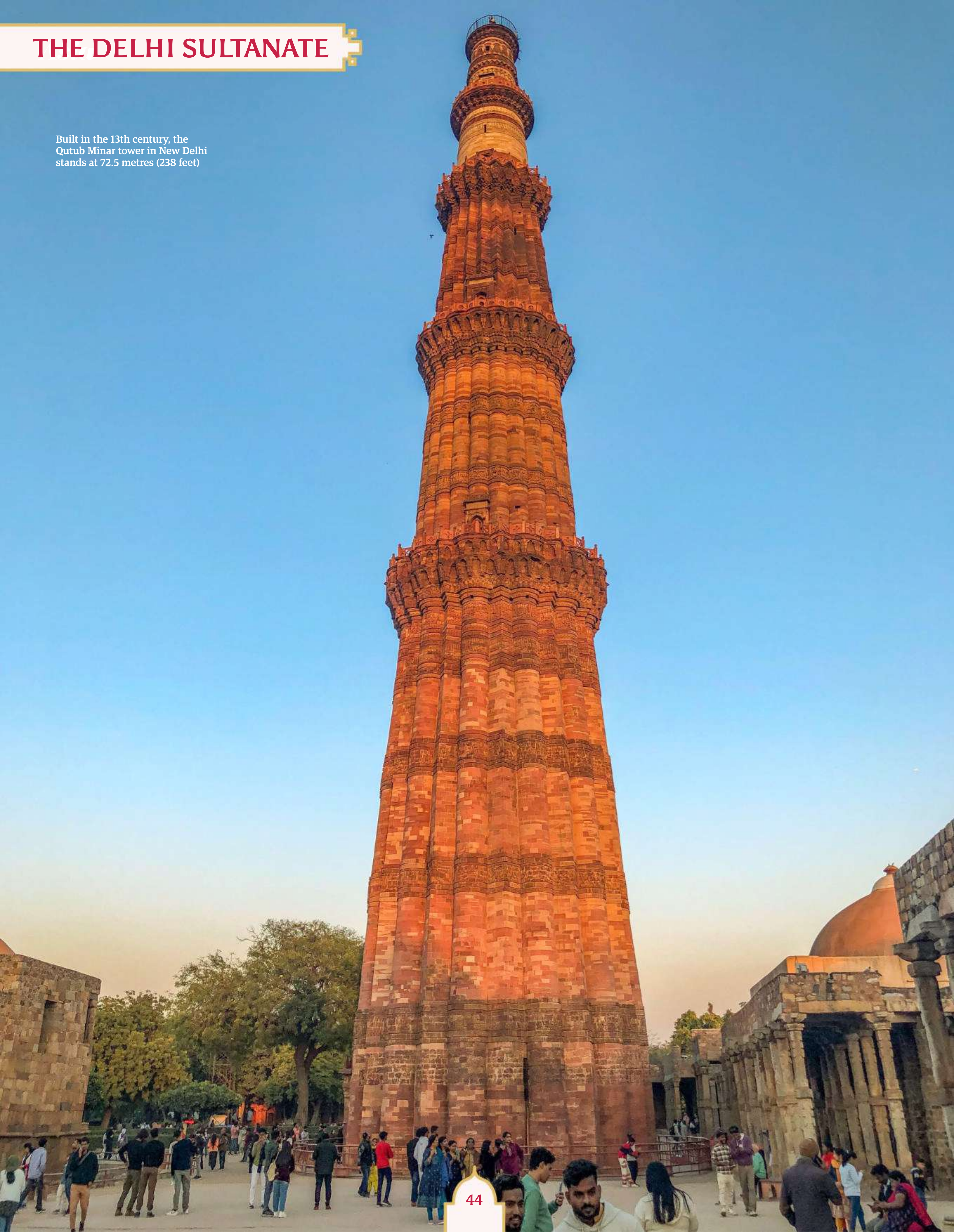
Science has interpreted the light sightings to be of a much more earthly nature. The hot, nutrient-rich and humid environment of the Bengal wetlands is thought to be home to regular displays of the spontaneous combustion of the gases methane and phosphine. These gases are released into the environment as organic matter decomposes in the swampy soil. When released into the air, the gas can ignite in snappy bursts of floating flames. Yet whether you watch in awe or fear, the ghostly blaze makes for a truly mesmerising sight.

The lights are thought to be the souls of dead fishermen



Living root bridges in Meghalaya, northeast India

Getty Images, Alamy



Built in the 13th century, the Qutub Minar tower in New Delhi stands at 72.5 metres (238 feet)

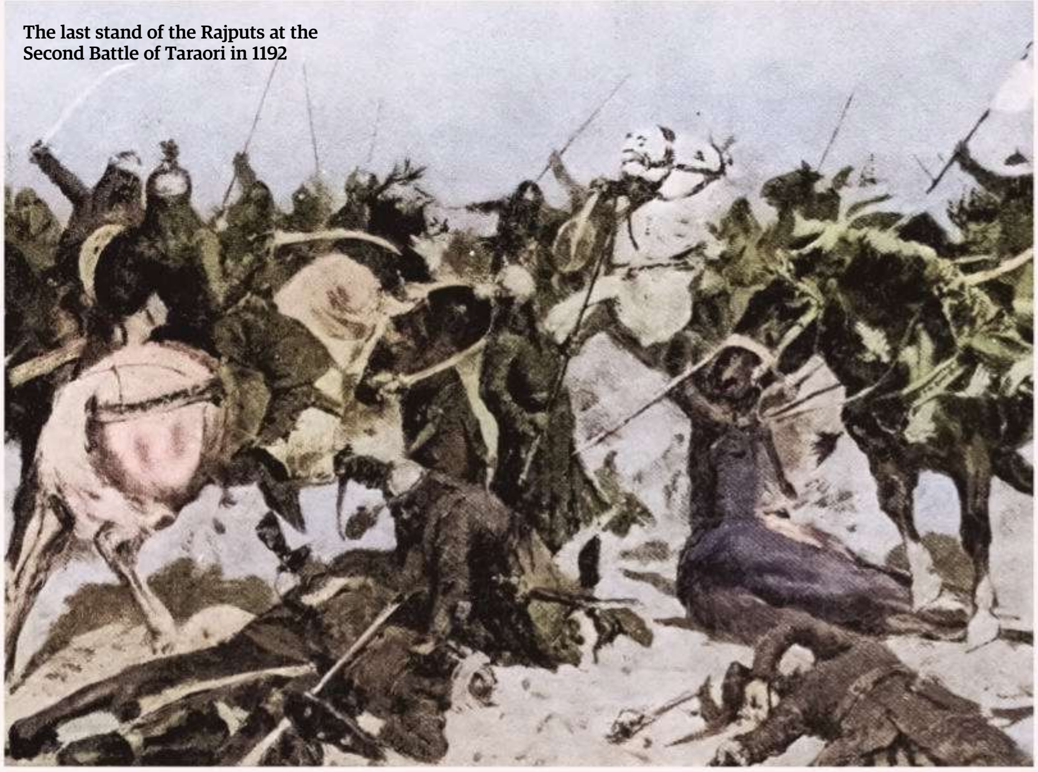
THE DELHI SULTANATE

For three centuries, five dynasties ruled over the vast empire of the Delhi Sultanate

Written by Catherine Curzon

For 320 years between 1206-1526, the empire of the Delhi Sultanate presided over vast swathes of the Indian subcontinent. Ruled over by five dynasties, it occupied territory in modern-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

The foundations of the Delhi Sultanate can be found in the campaigns of the Sunni Muslim Muhammad of Ghor, younger brother of Ghiyas ud-Din, sultan of Ghor. Muhammad served his brother loyally as a viceroy and enjoyed great success increasing the family influence by conquest, moving through Afghanistan, Persia and, latterly, India. Having captured the fortress at Tabarhindah, in 1191 Muhammad began to move into the eastern Ganges plains kingdom of Prithviraja Chauhan III of Delhi, who responded by raising an army in reply. Muhammad of Ghor and Prithviraja III's opposing forces met at Taraori, where Muhammad's army was routed and he came close to being captured. Forced into a humiliating retreat, Muhammad fled back to his own lands, leaving Prithviraja to besiege the fortress of Tabarhindah. In the event, the fortress held out for more than 12 months, during which time Muhammad raised an army that would be able to smash that of Prithviraja, who had made no plans for a repeat bout.


The last stand of the Rajputs at the Second Battle of Taraori in 1192

Muhammad's vast forces marched on the Chahamana kingdom, only to be met by a letter from Prithviraja III in which he promised Muhammad that no harm would come to him if he retreated immediately. Muhammad replied that he would need to obtain permission from his brother to do so but agreed to observe a truce until the answer came back. However, while Prithviraja committed to the truce, Muhammad had no intention of doing so. Instead, he had a small number of men tend the fires in his camp overnight to give the false impression that the army was still encamped. Then he led his troops in an attack on the unsuspecting Chahamanan camp, surrounding it with four divisions, each containing 10,000 archers.

After a brief fight at dawn, the Ghurid army carried out Muhammad's strategy and pretended to retreat, luring the Chahamanan forces into pursuing them. Only when they were tired by the chase did Muhammad lead a reserve force of 10,000 mounted archers out of hiding, finishing off his opponents. At the Second Battle of Taraori, he had avenged himself.

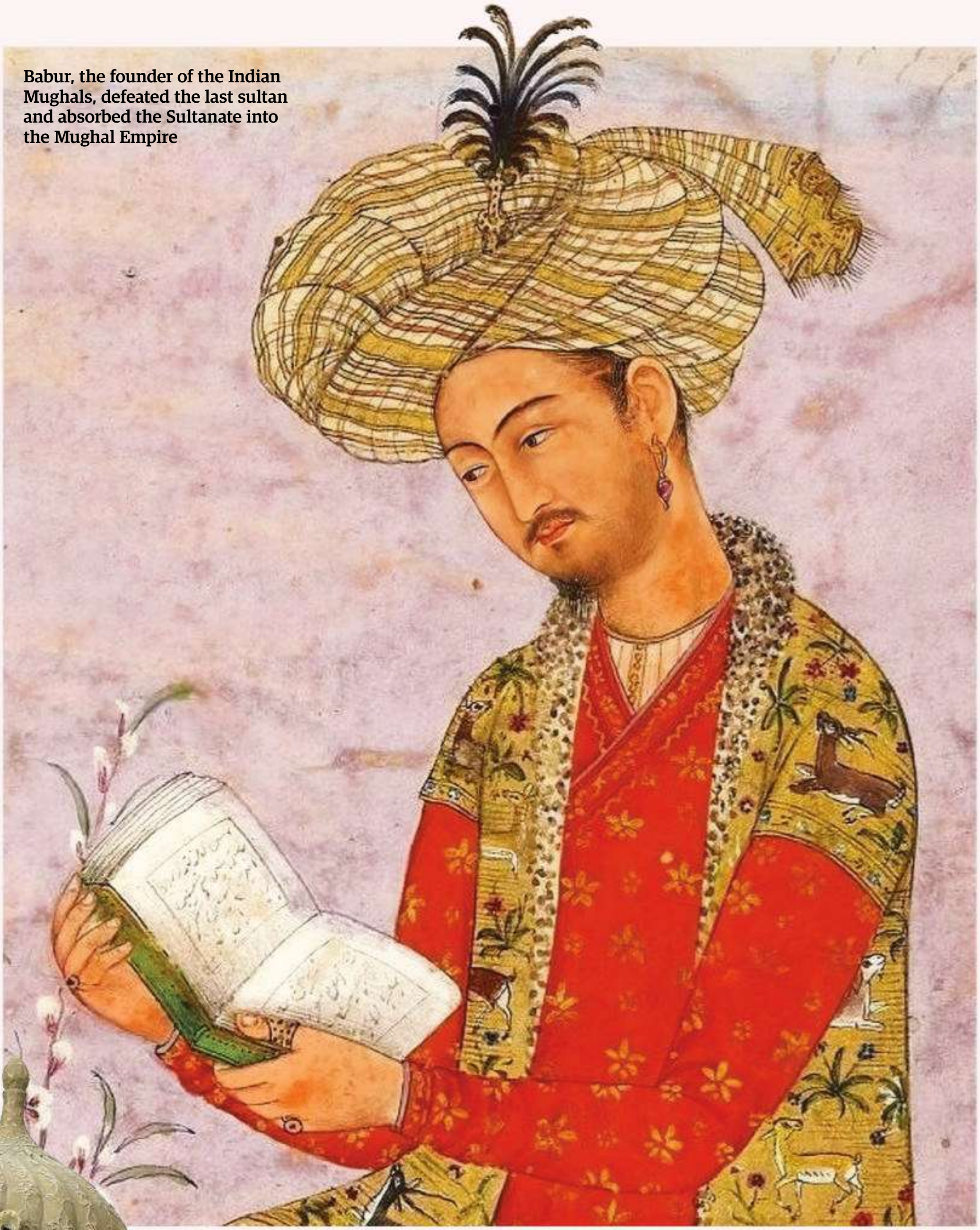
Victory laid the foundations of the Delhi Sultanate. Muhammad returned to his home territory of Ghazni, leaving his Turkish slave general Qutb al-Din Aibak to serve as viceroy in the freshly conquered Chahamana territory. In 1192,

© Alamy

Aibak captured Delhi itself. He would later go on to establish the Mamluk dynasty and become the first Sultan of Delhi.

In 1194, Muhammad of Ghor returned to India with a 50,000-strong army and met the forces of King Jayachandra of the Gahadavala dynasty at the Battle of Chandawar. The battle was fought on the banks of the Jumna River at what is now Firozabad, close to Agra. Jayachandra had the upper hand until an arrow struck him in the eye, killing him. He fell from his war elephant and was so badly trampled that his corpse could only be identified by the gold caps on his teeth. With their commander dead, his army turned and ran. Muhammad of Ghor was now in control of a vast portion of northern India, and he and Qutb al-Din Aibak moved on through the land, consolidating their gains.

Though some historians date the founding of the Delhi Sultanate from this series of battles, the majority instead use the date of 1206, when Muhammad of Ghor was assassinated by Ismā īlī Shia Muslims. Qutb al-Din Aibak was crowned sultan on 24 July 1206, marking the official birth of the Delhi Sultanate.

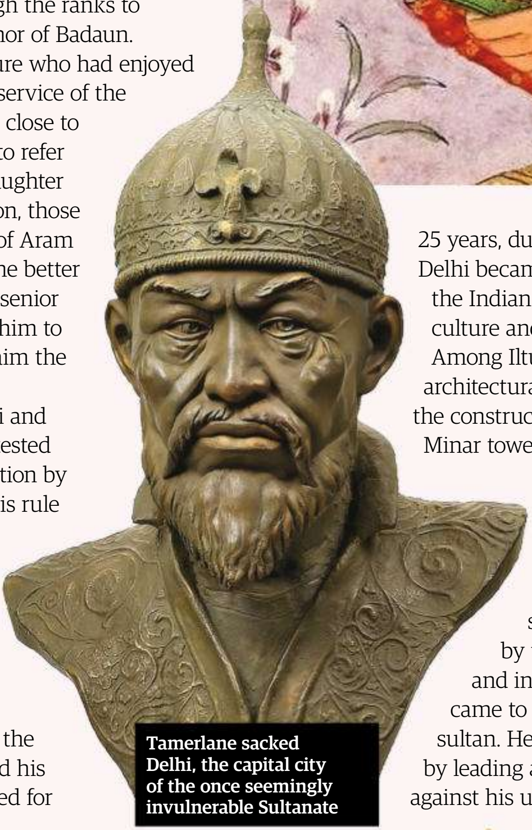


Babur, the founder of the Indian Mughals, defeated the last sultan and absorbed the Sultanate into the Mughal Empire

As sultan, Aibak focused on consolidation rather than expansion and was known as a benevolent and generous ruler. He died as a result of a horse-riding accident just four years into his reign having appointed no heir. His successor, Aram Shah, was chosen by powerful nobles but ruled for just a few months, enduring dissent and rebellion before he was dethroned by the man who would become the third sultan of Deli.

Just like Aibak, Shams ud-Din Iltutmish had started life as a slave and was in fact bought by Aibak, swiftly rising through the ranks to eventually become the governor of Badaun. Iltutmish was a respected figure who had enjoyed a distinguished record in the service of the Sultanate. He was particularly close to Qutb al-Din Aibak, who used to refer to him as a son and whose daughter was his consort. For this reason, those who opposed the succession of Aram Shah felt that Iltutmish was the better candidate for the role. Led by senior military officers, they invited him to overthrow Aram Shah and claim the throne himself.

Iltutmish marched on Delhi and seized power. Those who protested were punished without hesitation by Iltutmish, who consolidated his rule by defeating Shah's army. What happened to Aram Shah himself is not clear; he was certainly killed, but whether this was in battle or via execution is unknown. With Shah's death Iltutmish became the ruler of the Delhi Sultanate. He established his capital city in Delhi and reigned for 25 years, during which time Delhi became recognised as the Indian centre of Islamic culture and political power.



Tamerlane sacked Delhi, the capital city of the once seemingly invulnerable Sultanate

Among Iltutmish's most notable architectural achievements was the construction of the Qutb Minar tower, which had been started by the first sultan, for whom it is named.

The Mamluk dynasty was succeeded in 1290 by the Khalji dynasty, and in 1296 Ala al-Din came to power as the 13th sultan. He seized the throne by leading a murderous coup against his uncle and father-in-law, Jalal al-Din, who had himself achieved power by deposing the Mamluks. In the first years of his reign Ala al-Din successfully fended off repeated attempted invasions by Mongol groups, and he later avenged himself with the ransacking of Mongol territory in what is now Afghanistan.

Though Ala al-Din sat at the head of an already mighty power, he was determined to conquer yet more kingdoms and bring them under the control of the Delhi Sultanate. Particularly attractive was the wealthy region of Gujarat, which was ruled over by the Hindu Vaghela dynasty. Gujarat enjoyed not only fertile agricultural land but also direct access to the rich Indian Ocean trade routes, which Ala al-Din wanted to open up to the Muslim merchants of north India.

In early 1299, Ala al-Din raised an army and marched on Gujarat, taking King Karna utterly by surprise. Gujarat fell quickly to the invaders, leaving Karna to flee just days before Ala al-Din's

Jaisalmer Fort was constructed in 1185 and is still partly occupied today

> “The Sultanate never truly recovered from the anarchy that followed the sacking of its capital city”

army arrived in the capital, Anahilavada. The city was a treasure trove of wealth, jewels and precious metals, and the invaders sacked it, seizing the royal treasure and the absent king’s wives. As they moved through Gujarat, the Delhi generals sacked Hindu temples and centres of worship, towns and cities alike. They slaughtered without mercy and plundered whatever they found. But Ala al-Din wasn’t finished yet.

As his soldiers were sacking Gujarat, Ala al-Din was irritated at news of a report of a raid by members of the Bhatti Rajput tribe on his treasure caravan. His forces besieged the fortress of Jaisalmer, which was under the command of Rawal Jait Singh, subjecting those inside to an agonisingly drawn-out siege. As food and water ran out, those within the fort grew desperate; the women committed jauhar – a Hindu form of self-immolation – while the men fought to their deaths. With Jaisalmer now in their hands, the forces of the Delhi Sultanate could move into Bhatti territory.

Yet things began to go badly within the Delhi Sultanate throughout the 14th century as some of its conquered states attempted to establish their independence, chipping away at its strength and influence. A civil war further exacerbated issues within the empire, and Tamerlane, the Turco-Mongol founder of the Timurid Empire, took advantage of the unrest within the Sultanate to cross the Indus River in late September 1398 at the head of a 90,000-strong army. By December, he had reached Delhi, sacking cities along the way.

Sultan Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Shah Tughluq was waiting for the invaders with an army of war elephants whose tusks had been dipped in poison, but Tamerlane was one step ahead of him. He dug trenches around his cavalry to prevent spooked horses from fleeing, then unleashed camels on the war elephants, causing them to panic. As the elephants tried to escape the camels, their poison-tipped tusks wreaking havoc on their own lines, Tamerlane’s soldiers bombarded the enemy troops. Delhi fell, to be sacked by Tamerlane.

The Delhi Sultanate never truly recovered from the anarchy that followed the sacking of its capital city. Under the subsequent Sayyid dynasty the empire’s power began to decline, as did that of the dominant Sunni Islam sect with the rise of new sects outside Delhi. By the time the Afghan Lodi dynasty came to power over the Sultanate in 1451 it was a minor power.

The Delhi Sultanate came to a definitive end in 1526, with the death of Ibrahim Lodi. Lodi, the 31st and last sultan of Delhi, was killed in battle by Babur, the founder of the Indian Mughal Empire. Upon Lodi’s death what remained of the once mighty Delhi Sultanate passed into history, absorbed by its Mughal conquerors.

© Getty Images

THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

Image source: wiki/art.thewalters.org

A NEW EMPIRE 1526

The ruler of Kabulistan, Babur, leads his Mughal forces against the sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, and defeats him at the Battle of Panipat, giving birth to the Mughal Empire. It's notable as an early example of warfare involving gunpowder firearms and artillery.

TOMB DESIGN 1573

The tomb of Humayun is built and proves to be hugely influential as the first garden tomb of its type in India. It would inspire the later Taj Mahal design.

Image source: wiki/bl.uk

MURDEROUS SUCCESSION 1658

With Shah Jahan falling ill, his third son, Aurangzeb, eliminates his brothers to seize the throne and throws his father into the Red Fort in Agra, where he lives out the rest of his days.

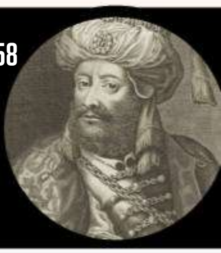


Image source: wiki/Gallica Digital Library

1526

1613

IMPERIAL HIATUS 1540

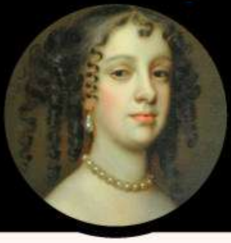
Having inherited the empire from his father ten years earlier, Humayun is driven out of the capital, Agra, by Sher Shah of Sur, beginning the short-lived Sur Empire.

HUMAYUN RETURNS 1555

The death of Sher Shah's successor, Salim Shah, leads to civil strife, and Humayun seizes the opportunity to return, winning the Battle of Sirhind on 22 June and reclaiming Delhi.

EAST INDIA COMPANY 1613

The East India Company defeats the Portuguese at the Battle of Swally and establishes warehouses in Surat as a result.



£10 RENT 1668

King Charles II receives the Portuguese territory of Bombay as part of the dowry for marrying Catherine of Braganza. He offers the lease to the East India Company for £10 of gold a year.

CHILD EMPEROR

1556

With his father having died from a fall down the stairs of his library, Akbar becomes the third Mughal emperor, aged 13. He's tested quickly by Hindu king Hemu in the north, but his army wins an important victory at the Second Battle of Panipat.

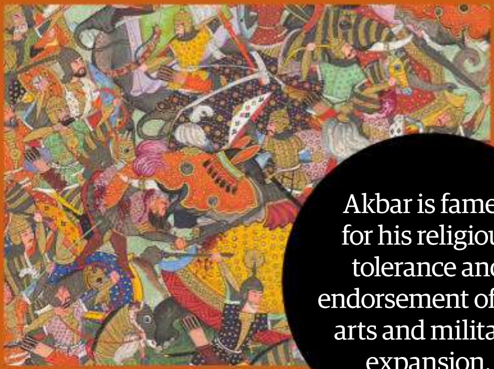


Image source: wiki/National Gallery of Victoria

> Akbar is famed for his religious tolerance and endorsement of the arts and military expansion.

IN LOVING MEMORY 1632

Shah Jahan begins the construction of a mausoleum for his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, called the Taj Mahal. The project takes 20,000 workers over 20 years to complete, including the gardens and ancillary buildings.

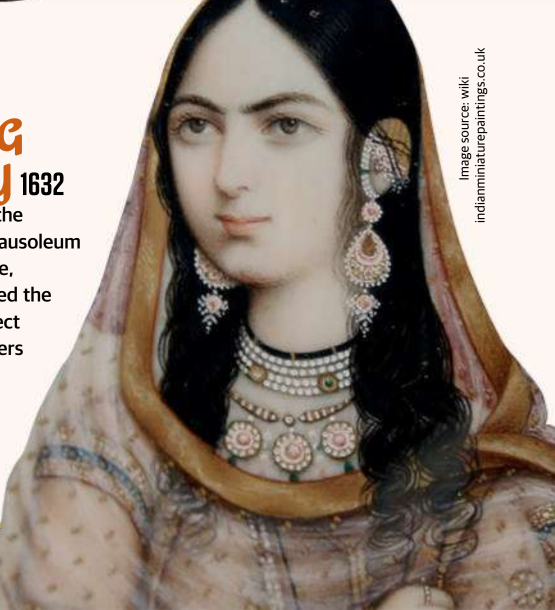


Image source: wiki indianminiaturepaintings.co.uk

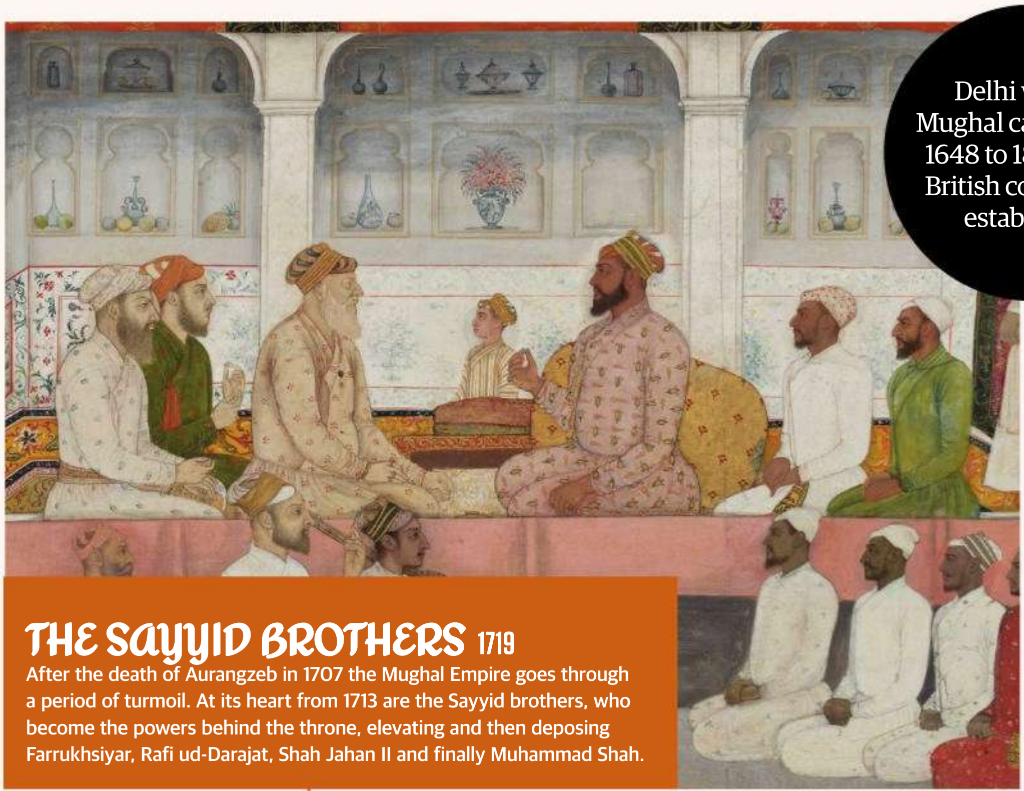
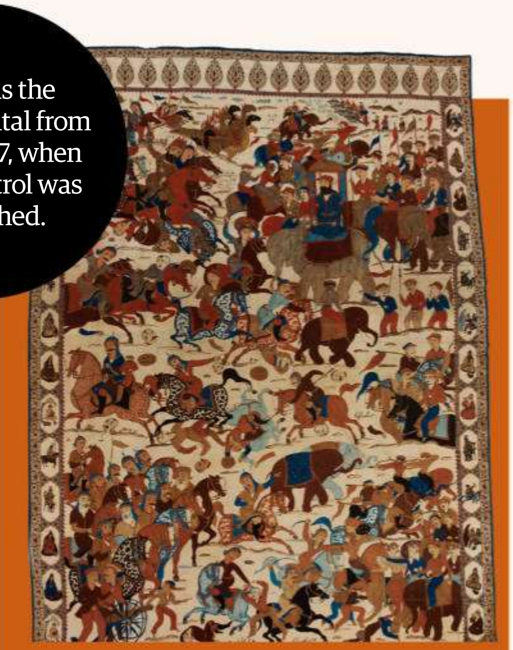


Image source: wiki/British Museum

THE SAYYID BROTHERS 1719

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the Mughal Empire goes through a period of turmoil. At its heart from 1713 are the Sayyid brothers, who become the powers behind the throne, elevating and then deposing Farrukhsiyar, Rafi ud-Darajat, Shah Jahan II and finally Muhammad Shah.

Delhi was the Mughal capital from 1648 to 1857, when British control was established.



PERSIAN INVASION 1739

Nadir Shah, the Persian king, leads an invasion of northern India that sees him defeat the imperial army of Muhammad Shah at the Battle of Karnal and then proceed to sack what had become the capital of the Mughal Empire, Delhi.

COMPANY EXPANSION 1696

The East India Company establishes Fort William to be the base of its new trading station. The area would later become Calcutta, and is nowadays known as Kolkata.

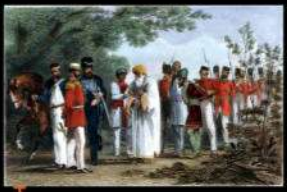
BATTLE OF SIKANDARABAD 1754

In a devastating defeat for the Mughal Empire, the Maratha Confederacy that had been expanding from the western coast of India wins the Battle of Sikandarabad, killing an estimated 15,000 Mughals.

Image source: wiki/Gallica Digital Library

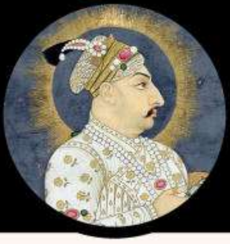
THE SEPOY MUTINY 1857

Sometimes called the First War of Independence, Indian troops rebel against British command. The revolt is suppressed and the India Act hands control of India from the East India Company to the British Government.



1719

1845



DECLINING EMPIRE 1720

After one of the Sayyid brothers is killed, Muhammad Shah is able to assert his independence. However, he will be the last Mughal emperor with complete control of his kingdom.

Image source: wiki/San Diego Museum of Art

OUT OF EXILE 1760

After the assassination of his father, the exiled Shah Alam II declares himself emperor and sets his sights on retaking Delhi and restoring the dominance of the Mughal Empire.

BATTLE OF BUXAR 1764

The receding remnants of the Mughal Empire combines its strength with Bengal and Awadh against the East India Company but loses comprehensively.

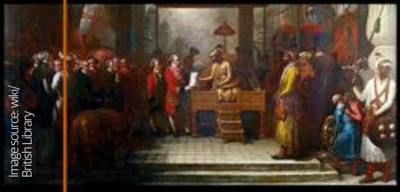


Image source: wiki/ British Library

THE BLACK HOLE

1756

The ruler of Bengal, Sirāj al-Dawlah, captures Calcutta and the surrendering garrison of the East India Company is imprisoned. The cramped conditions and heat result in a number of deaths, although exact figures are disputed. Regardless, the incident becomes a rallying point for British imperialists.

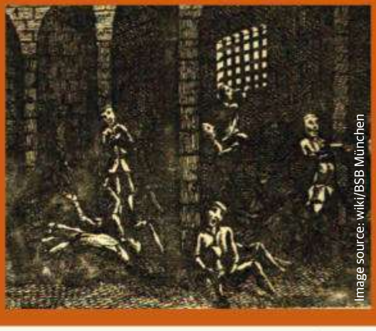


Image source: wiki/BSB München

THE SIKH WARS 1845

The First and Second Sikh Wars are fought between 1845 and 1849 between the East India Company and Sikh Punjab state. The first war sees the British take over swathes of Sikh land and install troops in Lahore. The second war is incited by a revolt in Multan that becomes national but is crushed.

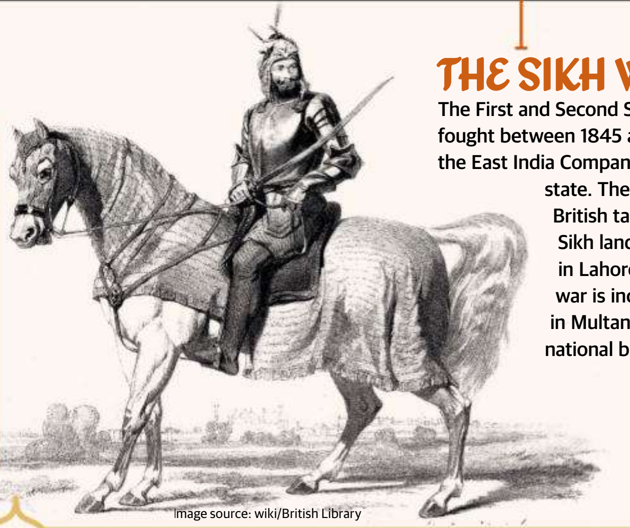
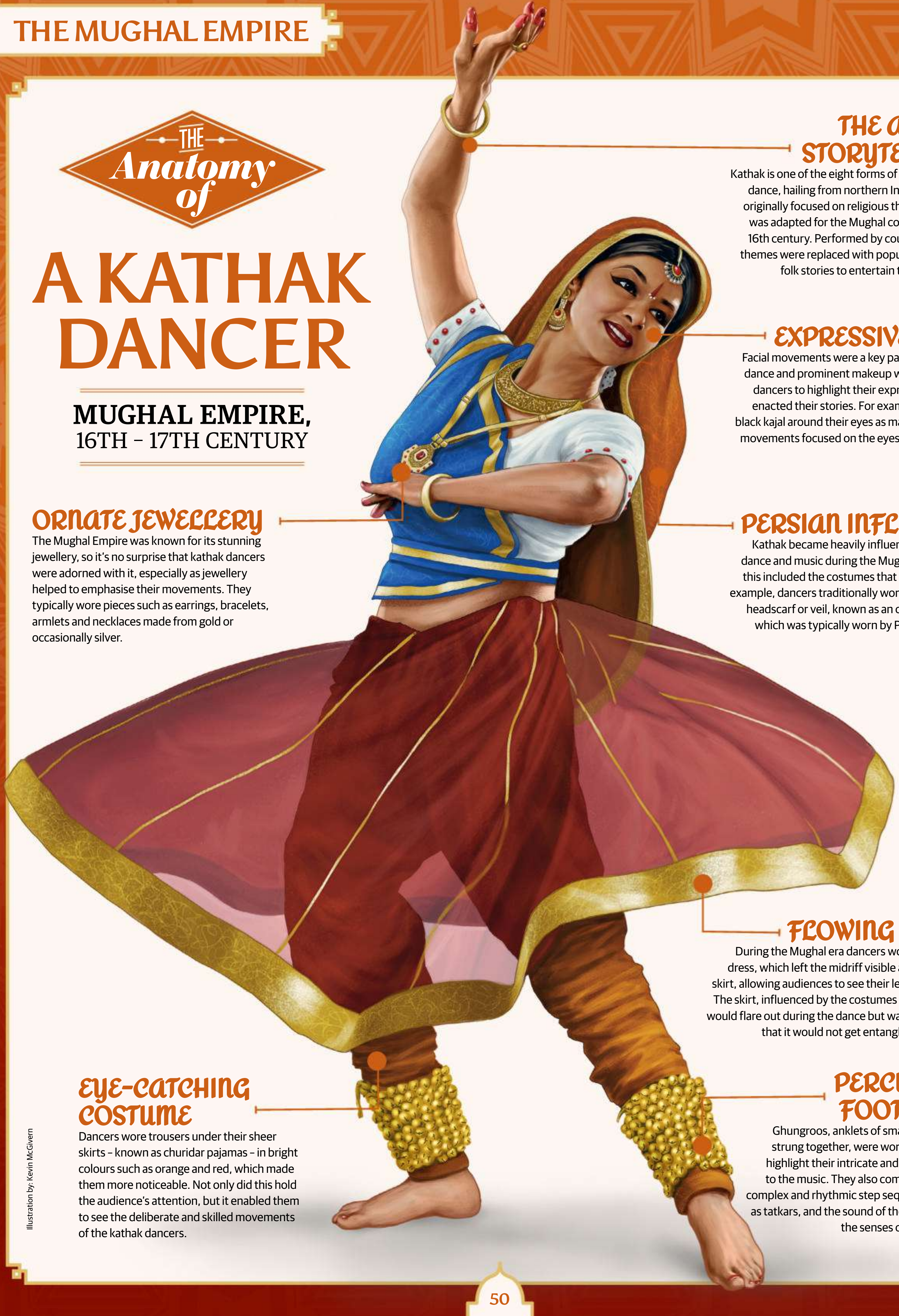


Image source: wiki/British Library

THE *Anatomy of* A KATHAK DANCER

MUGHAL EMPIRE,
16TH – 17TH CENTURY



THE ART OF STORYTELLING

Kathak is one of the eight forms of classical Indian dance, hailing from northern India. This dance originally focused on religious themes before it was adapted for the Mughal courts during the 16th century. Performed by courtesans, these themes were replaced with popular and secular folk stories to entertain the aristocracy.

EXPRESSIVE EYES

Facial movements were a key part of the kathak dance and prominent makeup was worn by the dancers to highlight their expressions as they enacted their stories. For example, they wore black kajal around their eyes as many of the facial movements focused on the eyes and eyebrows.

ORNATE JEWELLERY

The Mughal Empire was known for its stunning jewellery, so it's no surprise that kathak dancers were adorned with it, especially as jewellery helped to emphasise their movements. They typically wore pieces such as earrings, bracelets, armlets and necklaces made from gold or occasionally silver.

PERSIAN INFLUENCE

Kathak became heavily influenced by Persian dance and music during the Mughal Empire and this included the costumes that were worn. For example, dancers traditionally wore a transparent headscarf or veil, known as an odhani or orhni, which was typically worn by Persian women.

FLOWING DRESS

During the Mughal era dancers wore an angrakha dress, which left the midriff visible and had a sheer skirt, allowing audiences to see their legs underneath. The skirt, influenced by the costumes of Sufi dancers, would flare out during the dance but was short enough that it would not get entangled in their feet.

EYE-CATCHING COSTUME

Dancers wore trousers under their sheer skirts – known as churidar pajamas – in bright colours such as orange and red, which made them more noticeable. Not only did this hold the audience's attention, but it enabled them to see the deliberate and skilled movements of the kathak dancers.

PERCUSSIVE FOOTWORK

Ghungroos, anklets of small metallic bells strung together, were worn by dancers to highlight their intricate and rapid footwork to the music. They also complemented the complex and rhythmic step sequences, known as tatkars, and the sound of the bells engaged the senses of the audience.

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern

COIN OF EMPEROR JAHANGIR

The Mughal Empire's currency was one of the finest in the world

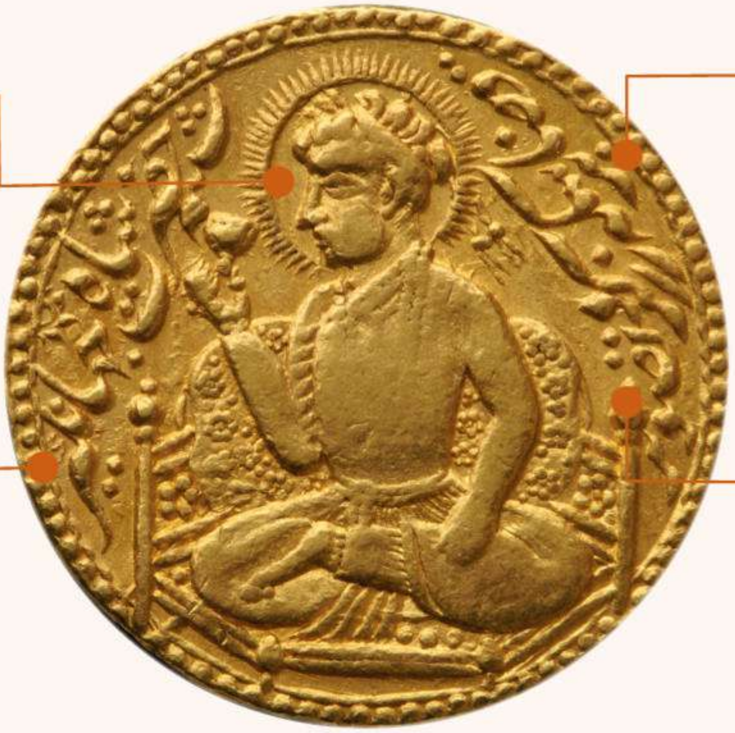
Influenced by Sher Shah, the sultan of the Suri Empire, Emperor Akbar introduced a trimetallic currency with coins - dams, rupees and mohurs - made out of copper, silver and gold respectively. Dams were the small, basic coins used for small payments in the 16th century, but by the 17th century silver rupees were more commonly used.

Akbar reformed the empire's currency and consolidated imperial control over the coinage, developing a centralised, uniform monetary system. Imperial mints were established in a number of important cities including Lahore, Delhi and Agra, and only imperial coins could be used to pay taxes. It was also the coinage used to pay the regime's officials and soldiers. Importantly, these coins were only valid if they bore the name of the current Mughal emperor.

Imperial mints churned out tens of millions of coins in gold, silver and copper. The Mughals minted their coins from imported bullion, namely gold from the New World and silver from Japan, because the empire had many exports that were in high demand. In fact, Mughal coins were renowned for being of high purity and they were not debased until the 1720s. For a fee, anyone who had bullion, foreign or old coins could take them to an imperial mint and have them minted.

It was during the reign of Akbar's son and successor, Emperor Jahangir, that the design and calligraphy of Mughal coins reached its zenith. He chose to experiment with the imagery used on the coins and famously issued a series of unique gold and silver coins with images of the zodiac signs. Jahangir explained in his memoir that he decided to use constellation figures to indicate the month the coin was issued, rather than using inscriptions.

Interestingly, Jahangir was also the only Mughal emperor to give his consort the right of coinage, releasing silver rupees that bore the name of his beloved empress, Nur Jahan. His son, Emperor Shah Jahan, tried to remove Nur Jahan's coins from circulation after he ascended the imperial throne because they were a symbol of the power and influence that she held in the Mughal Empire.



THE EMPEROR'S LIKENESS

The coin features a full-length portrait of Jahangir sitting cross-legged and reclining against a bolster on a hexagonal throne, holding a cup in his hand. Jahangir's love for alcohol is well-documented and so it's possible that he's holding a wine goblet.

PROTECTIVE POWERS

Around Jahangir's portrait is a Farsi inscription that reads "Destiny has made the picture of a likeness of venerable king Jahangir on this gold coin". People wore these coins as amulets to keep themselves safe, believing that the emperor's body had the power to protect them.

COIN DETAILS

This coin is a gold mohur and is 20.5mm (0.8in) in diameter. On the reverse side there's an inscription that states it was minted during the ninth year of Jahangir's reign at the imperial mint at Ajmer, where his court was based between 1615 and 1619.

CONTROVERSIAL DESIGN

Jahangir angered the Muslim clergy with his unique and experimental coinage designs, especially those that featured his portrait. This is because a portrait is a depiction of a 'living being', which is considered taboo in accordance with Islamic tradition.

Getty Images

EMINENT MUGHALS

Discover ten interesting men and women of the powerful Mughal court

ABUL FAZL

1556–1602

Abul Fazl was the grand vizier of Emperor Akbar and his court historian. He was one of the nine ministers and great minds in the emperor's court that became collectively known as the Navratnas, which means 'nine jewels'. He was commissioned by Akbar to write the Akbarnama, also known as the Book Of Akbar, the official chronicle of the emperor's life and reign, as well as the Ain-i-akbari, which documented the administration of the empire. The Akbarnama took Abul Fazl seven years to complete and is illustrated with some of the best surviving Mughal paintings.

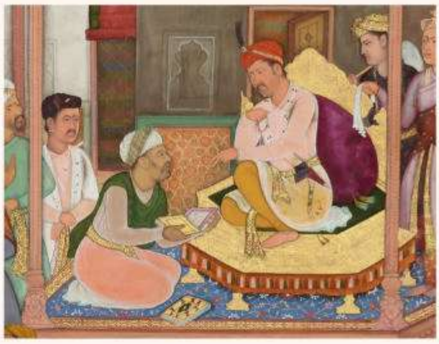


Image source: wiki/The Deceiver

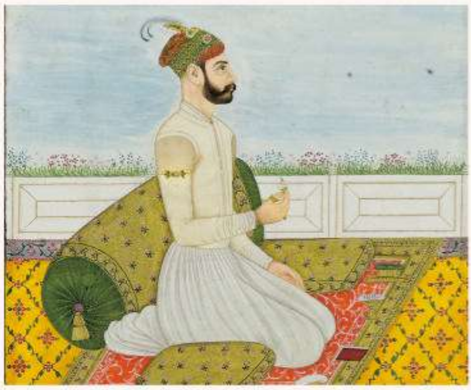


Image source: wiki/ Mughal portfolio

SAYYID HUSSAIN ALI KHAN BARHA

1666–1720

One half of the Sayyid brothers, Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan Barha was a kingmaker who deposed and ordered the assassination of Emperor Farrukhsiyar. The power behind the throne, Hussain Ali Khan and his brother Abdullah Khan installed and removed several puppet kings who had no independence or influence. Unsurprisingly, the two brothers made many enemies among the nobility and were eventually assassinated within days of each other.

AKBAR

1542–1605

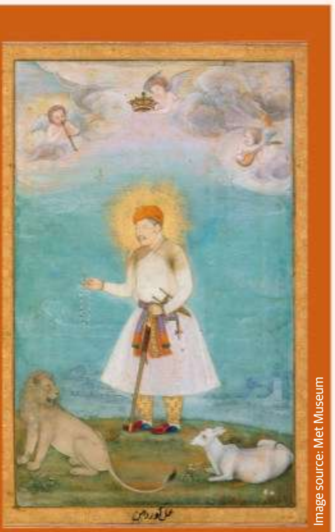


Image source: Met Museum

Often hailed as the greatest Mughal emperor, Akbar greatly expanded the empire's territory over the Indian subcontinent during his reign, which included capturing the kingdoms of Bengal, Gujarat and Rajput and conquering Afghanistan. He was celebrated for adopting reforms and policies to unify and maintain peace in his vast empire, most notably becoming the first Mughal emperor to promote religious tolerance for non-Muslims. Akbar was a patron of art and architecture and had a passion for literature, despite the fact that he was illiterate, earning a reputation as a wise ruler who enjoyed serious discussion.

Akbar was only 13 years old when he succeeded his father, Humayun, as the Mughal emperor.

BABUR

1483–1530

Babur was a descendant of both Genghis Khan and Timur and was born in Ferghana in present-day Uzbekistan. After capturing Kabul in Afghanistan in 1504, Babur went on to successfully invade India and defeat Ibrahim Lodi, the sultan of Delhi, at the Battle of Panipat in 1526. He subsequently founded the Mughal Empire and spent the rest of his reign conquering and consolidating his control across northern India, notably capturing the city of Agra in 1527. Although his dynasty ruled the empire for the next three centuries, Babur died after only four years as emperor and he was succeeded by his son, Humayun.

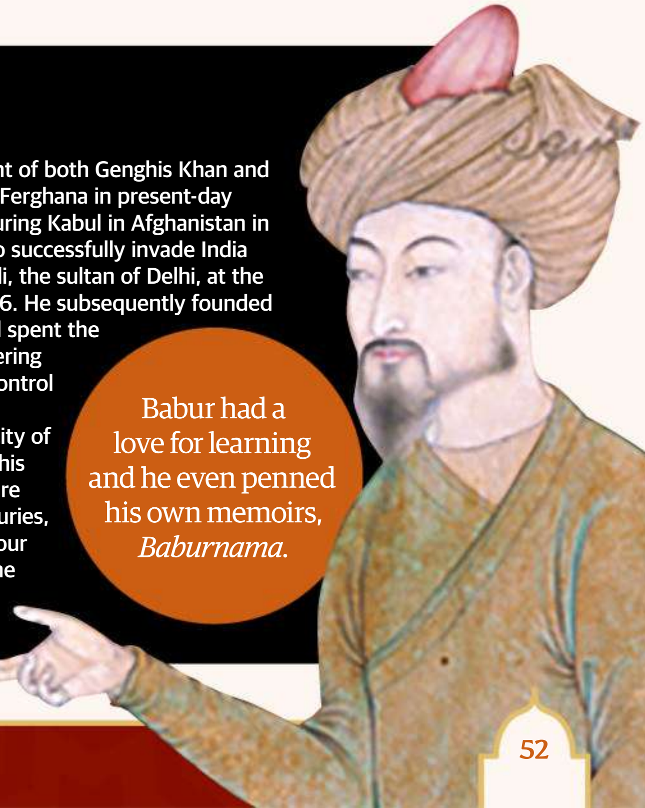


Image source: wiki/ Victoria and Albert Museum

Babur had a love for learning and he even penned his own memoirs, *Baburnama.*

GULBADAN BEGUM

C.1523–1603

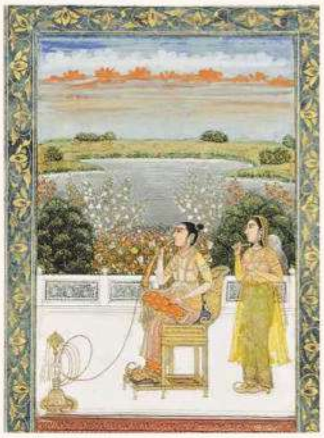
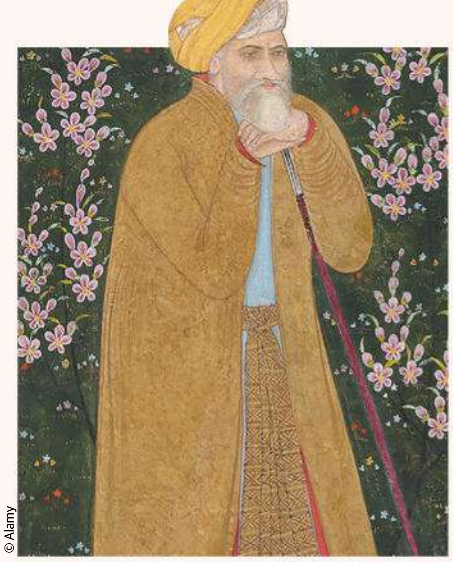


Image source: wiki/Helena Bx

The daughter of Babur and his wife Dildar Begum, Gulbadan famously wrote the *Humayun Nama*, an important contemporary account of her brother Humayun's reign. Commissioned by her nephew, Emperor Akbar, Gulbadan's work provides a rare insight into the everyday life of the royal family, as well as information about the Mughal harem. She spent the last years of her life dedicated to charity and devotion, and upon her death Akbar himself carried her bier.



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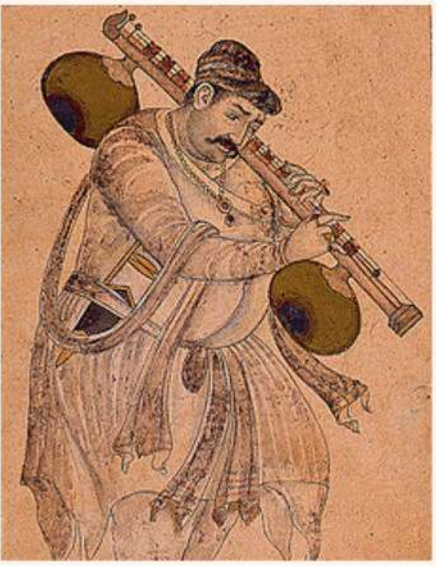
FARRUKH BEG

C.1545–C.1615

One of the most famous painters of the Mughal Empire, Farrukh Beg joined the court of Emperor Akbar after his patron Muhammad Hakim, Akbar's half-brother, died. Travelling from Kabul to India, he created miniature paintings for some of the emperor's biggest commissions, such as the first illustrated edition of the Akbarnama. A testament to Farrukh Beg's skill, Emperor Jahangir praised his talent in his memoirs, stating that he was "unrivalled in the age".



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NAUBAT KHAN

17TH CENTURY

Naubat Khan was an influential musician and composer at the Mughal court, renowned in particular for his skill playing the veena string instrument. Also known by the name Ali Khan Karori, he was the chief of the Naubat Khana, the drum house in which the royal drums and music were played, during the reign of Akbar. He remained at court after Akbar's death and was awarded the title 'Naubat Khan' by Emperor Jahangir in 1607.

JAHANARA BEGUM

1614–1681

The eldest child of Emperor Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, Jahanara Begum wielded a lot of political influence during her father's reign, often resolving disagreements among the imperial family. A renowned cultural patron, she funded many architectural projects with her own vast personal income, including the Chandni Chowk (the central bazaar in Old Delhi), the Jami Masjid mosque in Agra, and the Mullah Shah Badakhshi mosque in Srinagar – all of which are still standing today.

> Jahanara succeeded her mother as padshah begum (first lady) of the Mughal Empire despite the fact that her father had other wives.

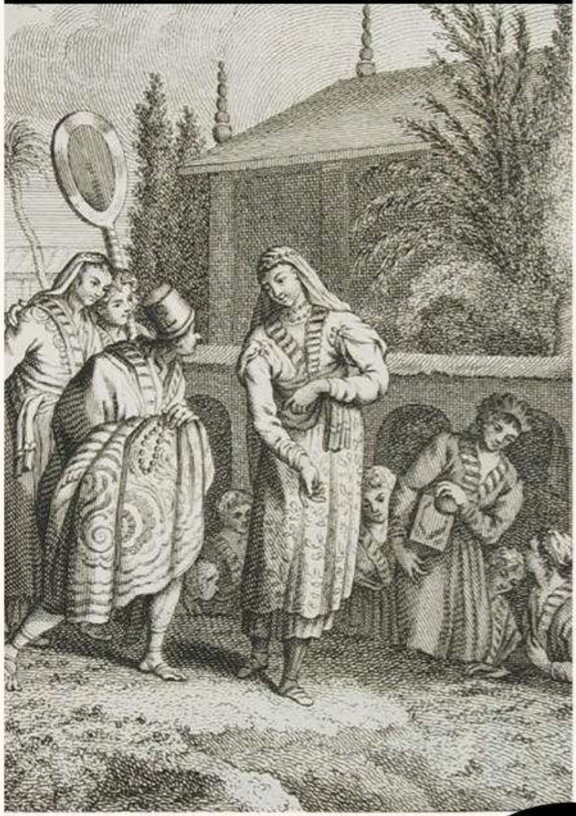


Image source: wiki/Columbia University

BAHADUR SHAH II

1775–1862

Bahadur Shah II was nominally the last Mughal emperor, whose authority was restricted to the city of Delhi and the surrounding territory after the empire shrank significantly from the 18th century. In May 1857, there was a major rebellion involving both Muslims and Hindus against the British East India Company. The rebels seized Delhi and declared that Bahadur Shah was their emperor, with revolt spreading across central India. However, the British had recaptured Delhi by September and the rebellion ultimately failed. The emperor, who was 81, was imprisoned, tried for treason and exiled to Burma, where he died five years later.

> Bahadur Shah II was a talented Urdu poet whose pen name, Zafar, meant 'victory'.

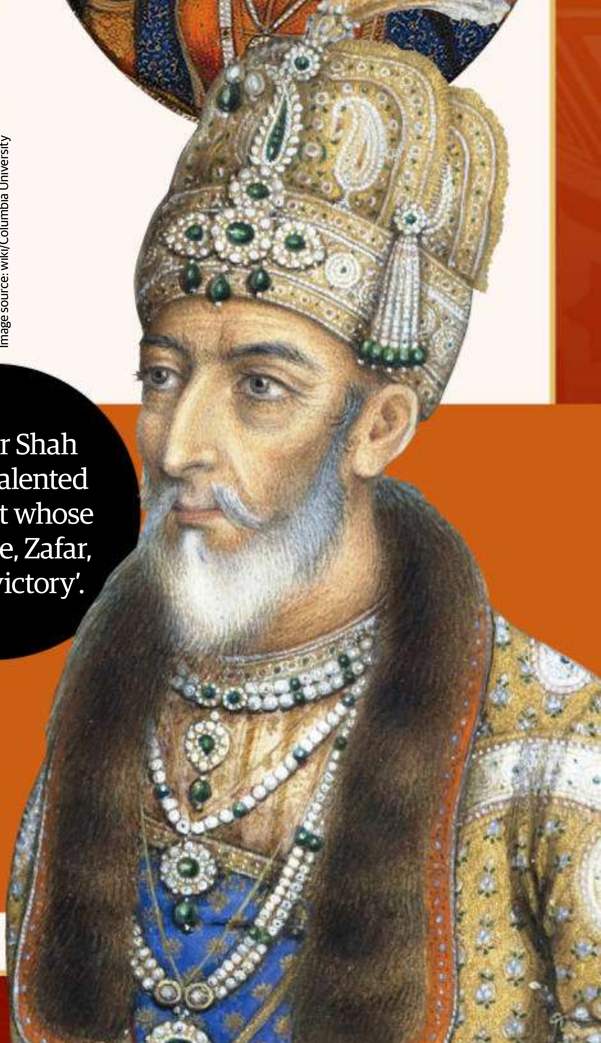


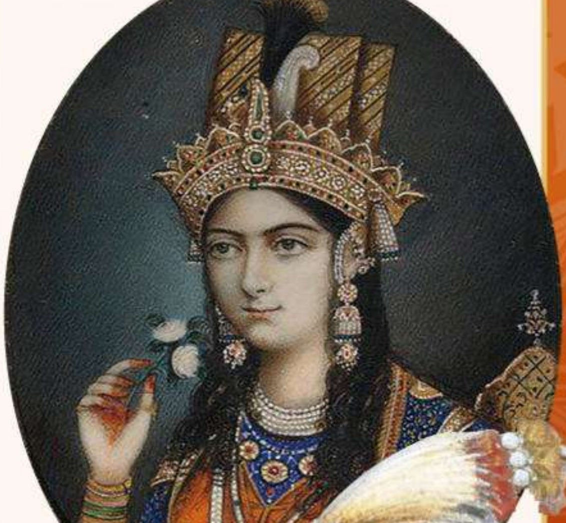
Image source: wiki

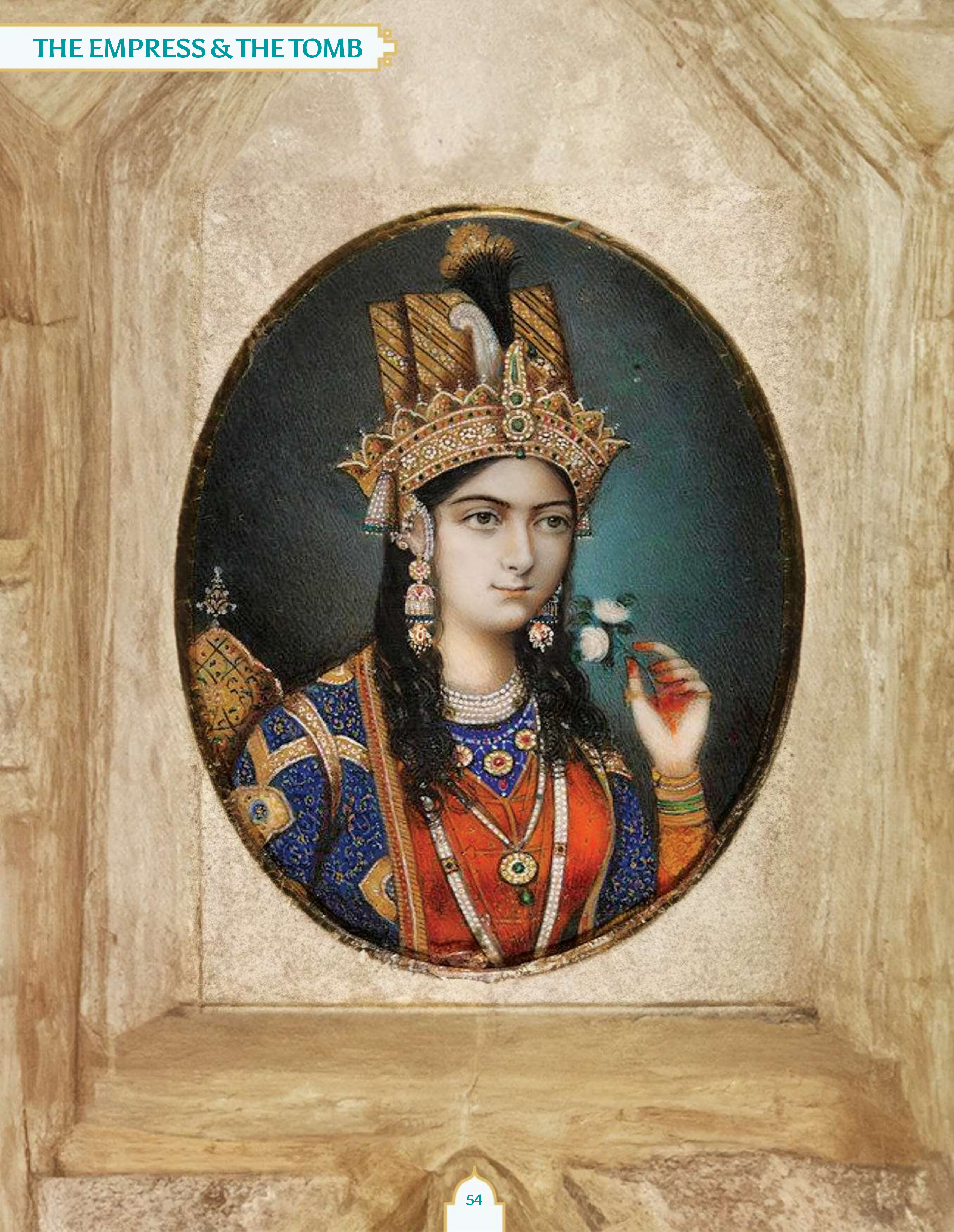
MUMTAZ MAHAL

1593–1631

The famous inspiration for the Taj Mahal, Mumtaz Mahal was the empress consort and favourite wife of Emperor Shah Jahan. Although her birth name was Arjumand Banu Begum, her husband bestowed upon her the title of Mumtaz Mahal, which means 'Exalted one of the Palace'. A niece of Empress Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal travelled with Jahan across the empire, even on his military campaigns. In fact, he trusted her so much that the emperor gave her his imperial seal, the Mehr Uzaz. Altogether she had 14 children with Jahan, including their third son, Emperor Aurangzeb.

Image source: wiki/Victoria and Albert Museum





THE EMPRESS & THE TOMB

She was the beloved wife of Shah Jahan and a protector of the poor and destitute, but her story ended in tragedy…

Written by Callum McKelvie

The romance of Mumtaz Mahal and the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan is one of the greatest love stories in history. Engaged as teenagers, they spent a few happy decades together before Mahal's tragic death during childbirth in 1631. Throughout their relationship Mahal was the emperor's closest advisor and his one true soulmate. Upon her untimely passing he was inconsolable and demanded his subjects build a monument worthy of his love for her - the Taj Mahal. But just who was the woman whose memory inspired one of the wonders of the world?

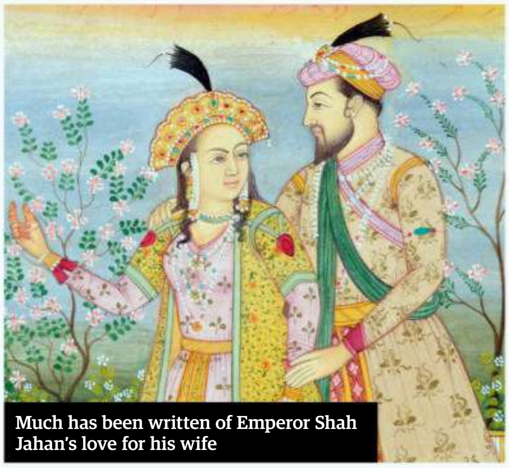
Mumtaz Mahal was born Arjumand Banu Begum in Agra on 27 April 1593 to an esteemed family of Persian origin. Her father, Abu'l-Hasan Asaf Khan, was highly respected at the Mughal court. However, her family had not always held such influence and, despite his nobility, when her grandfather first arrived at the emperor's palace his only worldly possessions were a pair of donkeys.

At the age of 14 she was betrothed to the 15-year-old Prince Khurram. The prince was infatuated with his young bride-to-be, but the court astrologers demanded the pair wait five years before marrying, selecting a date they decreed would ensure a happy union. Much has been written of the prince's love for his wife, and he famously named her 'Mumtaz Mahal', roughly meaning 'Exalted One of the Palace'.

When Prince Khurram proclaimed himself Shah Jahan (the emperor) of India in 1628 his wife enjoyed a privileged position as his closest confidant. According to Norwegian historian Waldemar Hansen, "at her intercession, the emperor forgave enemies or commuted death sentences." Mumtaz Mahal accompanied her husband on all of his military campaigns and was also entrusted with the royal seal. Despite her life of luxury, Mumtaz Mahal worked hard to ensure that the destitute and poor of the Shah's kingdom were well cared for. Author Soma Mukherjee states that "widows, orphans, destitutes and other troubled and poor people came to her from all parts of the country." The empress persuaded her husband to spend vast sums of money in helping these impoverished citizens, sometimes providing them with land grants or financial aid.

When she was not devoting herself to charity Mumtaz Mahal was an admirer of the arts and appears to have been particularly fond of poetry. She offered patronage to a number of artists but was especially enamoured with the work of the Sanskrit poet Vanshidhar Mishra. The empress was even said to have composed a number of verses herself in Persian. The lost Zahara Bagh garden on the river Yamuna in Agra, despite previously thought to have been built by one of the daughters of the emperor Babur, is now known to have been commissioned by Mumtaz Mahal.

But was there a dark side to the empress? Niccolao Manucci, a 17th-century Venetian historian and traveller, claimed that it was her bloody vengeance that helped lead to the massacre of the Portuguese at Hugli. The Portuguese had founded Hugli in West Bengal in 1537 and had remained there for nearly a century. According to Manucci, one night they stole from the empress two servant girls, and despite her demands to return them, they refused. It was this act, Manucci claims, that would ultimately "cost them dear". However, as Waldemar Hansen points out, this is unlikely for a number of reasons, namely that "Mumtaz Mahal was dead at the time of Shah Jahan's reprisals".



Much has been written of Emperor Shah Jahan's love for his wife

At the age of 38, Mumtaz Mahal gave birth to her 14th child. It was to prove a difficult labour, lasting some 14 hours. Tragically, the empress suffered a postpartum haemorrhage (a case of severe vaginal bleeding) and passed away soon after her daughter's birth.

So devastated was Shah Jahan at her death that he purportedly locked himself away for a whole year in mourning. When he finally resurfaced he was said to have undergone a dramatic physical transformation. His hair was white, his back crooked and his face was a map of wrinkles - all from the immense grief he felt at her loss.

But Shah Jahan also emerged with a new determination to immortalise the memory of his beloved wife. He ordered that her body be exhumed from its resting place in a walled garden on the banks of the River Tapti and commissioned the construction of a vast tomb complex to be built in her honour. The resultant mausoleum would take thousands of workers over 20 years to complete at a cost of 32 million rupees. In 2007, it would be named one of the Seven Modern Wonders of the World…

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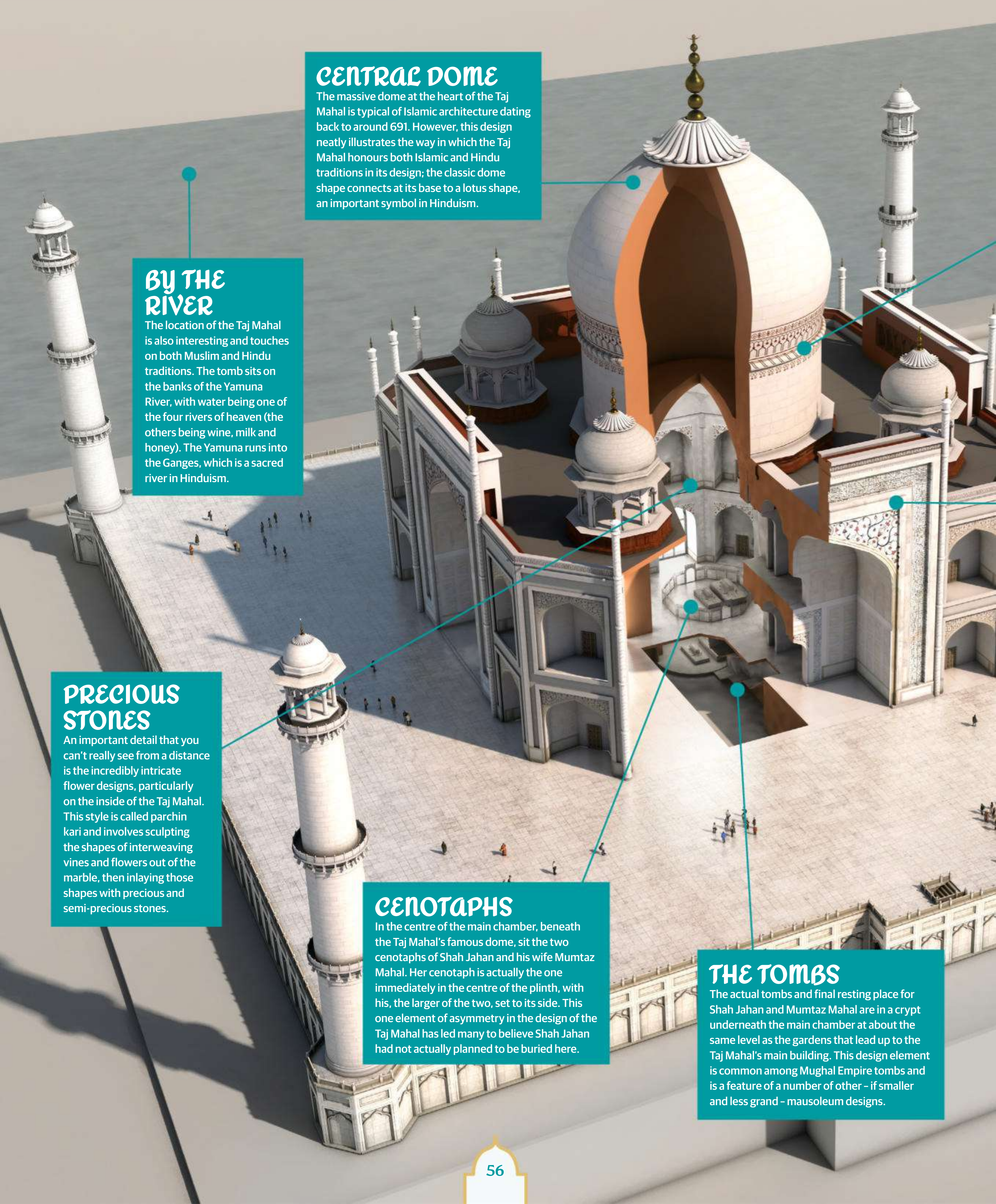


CENTRAL DOME

The massive dome at the heart of the Taj Mahal is typical of Islamic architecture dating back to around 691. However, this design neatly illustrates the way in which the Taj Mahal honours both Islamic and Hindu traditions in its design; the classic dome shape connects at its base to a lotus shape, an important symbol in Hinduism.

BY THE RIVER

The location of the Taj Mahal is also interesting and touches on both Muslim and Hindu traditions. The tomb sits on the banks of the Yamuna River, with water being one of the four rivers of heaven (the others being wine, milk and honey). The Yamuna runs into the Ganges, which is a sacred river in Hinduism.

PRECIOUS STONES

An important detail that you can't really see from a distance is the incredibly intricate flower designs, particularly on the inside of the Taj Mahal. This style is called parchin kari and involves sculpting the shapes of interweaving vines and flowers out of the marble, then inlaying those shapes with precious and semi-precious stones.

CENOTAPHS

In the centre of the main chamber, beneath the Taj Mahal's famous dome, sit the two cenotaphs of Shah Jahan and his wife Mumtaz Mahal. Her cenotaph is actually the one immediately in the centre of the plinth, with his, the larger of the two, set to its side. This one element of asymmetry in the design of the Taj Mahal has led many to believe Shah Jahan had not actually planned to be buried here.

THE TOMBS

The actual tombs and final resting place for Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal are in a crypt underneath the main chamber at about the same level as the gardens that lead up to the Taj Mahal's main building. This design element is common among Mughal Empire tombs and is a feature of a number of other – if smaller and less grand – mausoleum designs.

THE TAJ MAHAL

AGRA, INDIA, 1648

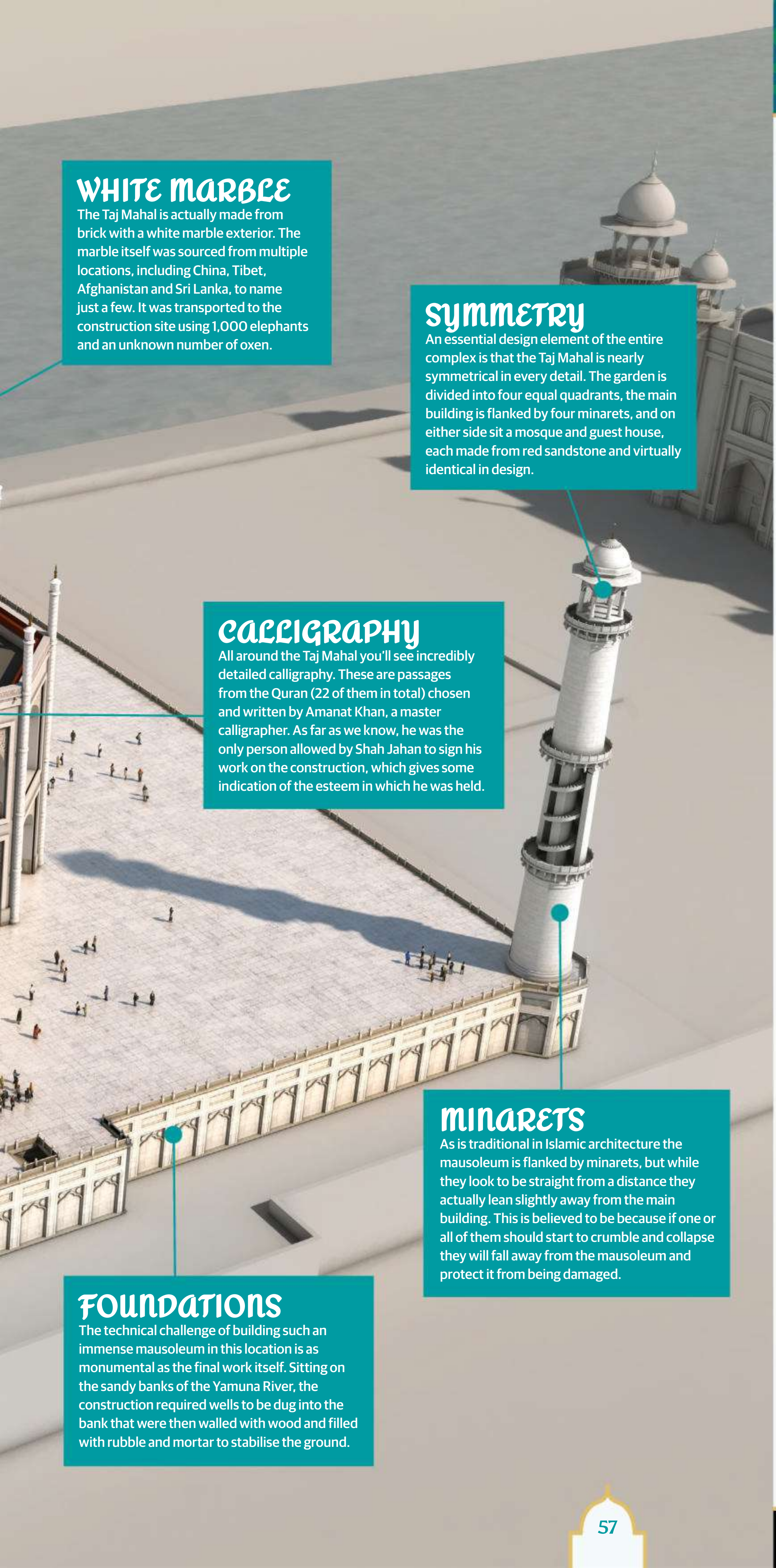
The Taj Mahal is considered to be one of the modern wonders of the world. It was made a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1983 and is estimated to receive 2.5 million visitors a year. However, as glorious a building as it is, its origin story is filled with personal tragedy.

The Taj Mahal is ultimately a mausoleum commissioned by Shah Jahan around 1632 to house the remains of one of his wives, Mumtaz Mahal. They had met years before Shah Jahan was made emperor and she was his second of his three wives, even though she met him first. They were married for 13 years and had 14 children in that time (although only seven survived infancy). It was shortly after the birth of their 14th child that Mahal passed away in 1631.

Since he was in the middle of a campaign to quell a rebellion in Burhanpur, Shah Jahan had her buried immediately, according to Muslim tradition, but she was exhumed a little later and her remains moved to Agra, where her mausoleum would be built. To honour the woman who is often referred to as his favourite wife, Shah Jahan constructed one of the most impressive and intricately designed mausoleums in history.

Shah Jahan actually has something of a reputation as a builder thanks to a number of big construction projects that he sanctioned using imperial funds. Two great mosques were also built in his capital of Agra, as well as a further mosque and the Red Fort in Delhi.

This particular project was the biggest, though, and he wanted it completed quickly. Even so, it's thought that around 20,000 people, including both skilled and unskilled labourers, spent two decades building the ultimate tribute to a lost love. A town named Mumtazabad was built alongside the Taj Mahal construction area in order to house all of these workers.



WHITE MARBLE

The Taj Mahal is actually made from brick with a white marble exterior. The marble itself was sourced from multiple locations, including China, Tibet, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, to name just a few. It was transported to the construction site using 1,000 elephants and an unknown number of oxen.

SYMMETRY

An essential design element of the entire complex is that the Taj Mahal is nearly symmetrical in every detail. The garden is divided into four equal quadrants, the main building is flanked by four minarets, and on either side sit a mosque and guest house, each made from red sandstone and virtually identical in design.

CALLIGRAPHY

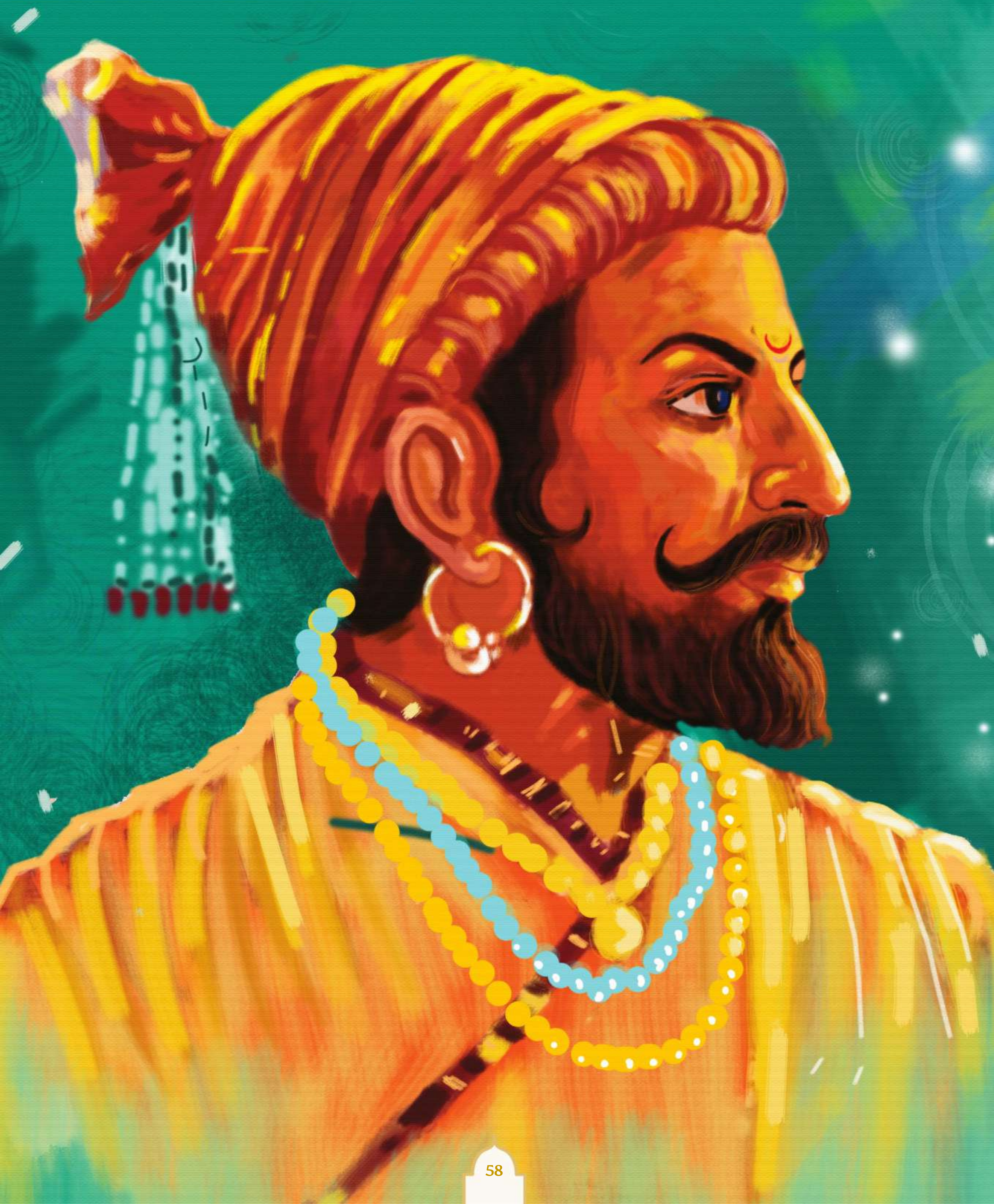
All around the Taj Mahal you'll see incredibly detailed calligraphy. These are passages from the Quran (22 of them in total) chosen and written by Amanat Khan, a master calligrapher. As far as we know, he was the only person allowed by Shah Jahan to sign his work on the construction, which gives some indication of the esteem in which he was held.

MINARETS

As is traditional in Islamic architecture the mausoleum is flanked by minarets, but while they look to be straight from a distance they actually lean slightly away from the main building. This is believed to be because if one or all of them should start to crumble and collapse they will fall away from the mausoleum and protect it from being damaged.

FOUNDATIONS

The technical challenge of building such an immense mausoleum in this location is as monumental as the final work itself. Sitting on the sandy banks of the Yamuna River, the construction required wells to be dug into the bank that were then walled with wood and filled with rubble and mortar to stabilise the ground.



CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI: INDIA'S LAST WARRIOR KING

Trained to lead armies, this nation-founding ruler proved to be one of the finest generals of his time

Written by Miguel Miranda

Spread along India's western coast, Maharashtra had long been home for elite kshatriyas – the warriors of the Hindu caste system – whose clans assumed the responsibility of governing the local population, albeit in tenuous feudalism. These Marathas formed an enduring identity and culture, and their homeland, with its hundreds of castles built on hilltops and ridges, had by the 16th century become overshadowed by Muslim sultanates in the south and east. To the north was an even greater power. For a single glorious century the better part of India had been ruled by a central Asian dynasty. These Mughals or Mogul emperors, four of them having reigned in succession after the founder Babur took Delhi in 1526, recognised few equals in wealth and power. By the middle of the 17th century their last hurrah was imminent when Aurangzeb seized the throne from his own father, the world king, or Shah Jahan, best known for immortalising his departed wife with a lavish tomb and garden in the form of the Taj Mahal.

By then the Mughals had kept the Rajput clans in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan under their thumbs for generations. The same imposition was forced on the Marathas, whose ambitious members could achieve rank and fortune by serving the emperors in Delhi. After all, the Marathas were foremost men of arms, and complacency and a languid acceptance of fate were not in their character. Shahaji Bhonsle, the father of the celebrated Shivaji, served the emperor Shah Jahan with distinction and won a small territory for himself in southern India. But the geographic limits of the Mughal Empire were the source of endless feuding.

The balance of power that tore southern India apart in the latter half of the 17th century pitted several kingdoms against each other. The Mughal Empire struggled to impose its will on the smaller sultanates in the Deccan plateau. Two rival territories, Bijapur and Golconda, were blocking the Mughal's expansion southward, and between them were the Marathas.

CASTLE BORN

Having ensconced his family in a small fortress called Shivneri, located near Poona, a city in Maharashtra, a son was born to Shahaji in early 1630. It was an auspicious date, and the infant's name was meant as homage to the goddess Shiva. The boyhood of Shivaji was spent in the midst of clan politics and military training. The effect on him was profound, and his first experience of warfare marked his late teenage years. Poona, known today as Pune, was a small city surrounded by citadels perched over sheer cliffs, and Shivaji, together with a retinue of comrades, occupied a single fort. By his mid-20s the youthful Shivaji had consolidated a fiefdom to call his own by taking over nearby fortresses.

> "The boyhood of Shivaji was spent in the midst of clan politics and military training. The effect on him was profound, and his first experience of warfare marked his late teenage years"

© Shutterstock

Events far away from Maharashtra soon engulfed the rest of the country. After subduing his own brothers and declaring himself emperor in 1658, when the Mughal Empire was still at its peak, Aurangzeb, having adopted the title Alamgir I, launched a series of conquests that sought to finish the work his estranged father started.

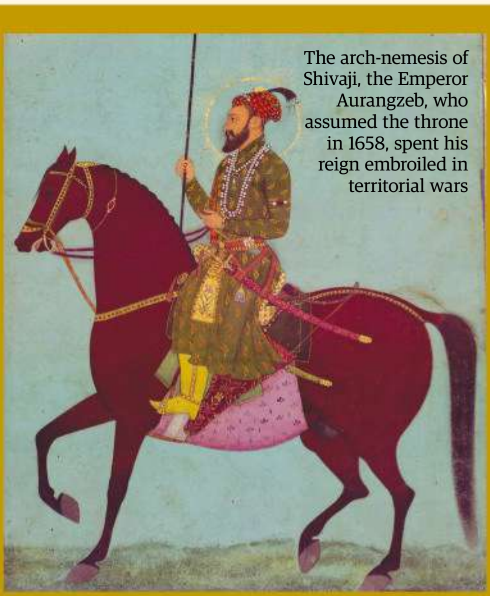
It would help to describe the Mughal army of the era, as it ranked among the largest on the Asian continent. Aurangzeb may have been a ruler of India but his begs and mirzas, the equivalent of European knights and counts, were an assorted lot often staffed with hardy veterans from Afghanistan, hence the widespread Pashtun surname Khan in the Mughal court. Until the 1670s, there were Hindus who served under his banner and enjoyed the favour of the imperial court. These included the Rajput Singhs who later humbled Shivaji. There existed temporary Hindu allies, such as Shivaji's father, who later rebelled against Shah Jahan in 1635, as well as mercenaries from Arabia and Turkey. Across India there existed independent armies paid for by local rulers from Bengal and beyond. The Marathas themselves were known to have trained soldiers in the tens of thousands.

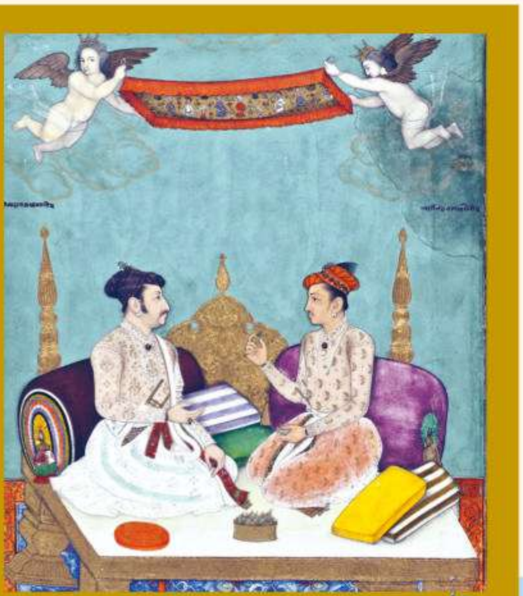
Caught in the treacherous politics of the Mughals and the Deccan sultanates, Shivaji spent the rest of his adulthood in the field. There was no respite from the demands of personal ambition and survival. Though an able commander, Shivaji's best-known exploits did not take place on any battlefield, and his enduring personality trait was an appetite for improvisation and risk. These were exhibited in his assassination of the Afghan general Afzal Khan, whom he welcomed in a personal conference before stabbing to death. The episode proved without a doubt that if the situation demanded it, Shivaji could get his hands dirty. The background to the incident was important too. Unwilling to meet Afzal Khan, a champion of the neighbouring Bijapur sultanate, in open warfare, Shivaji conspired with his family members to use pomp and protocol against his rival. It worked, and the khan's army were scattered by a Maratha surprise attack soon after Shivaji obtained the severed head of its leader.

EMPEROR VERSUS UPSTART

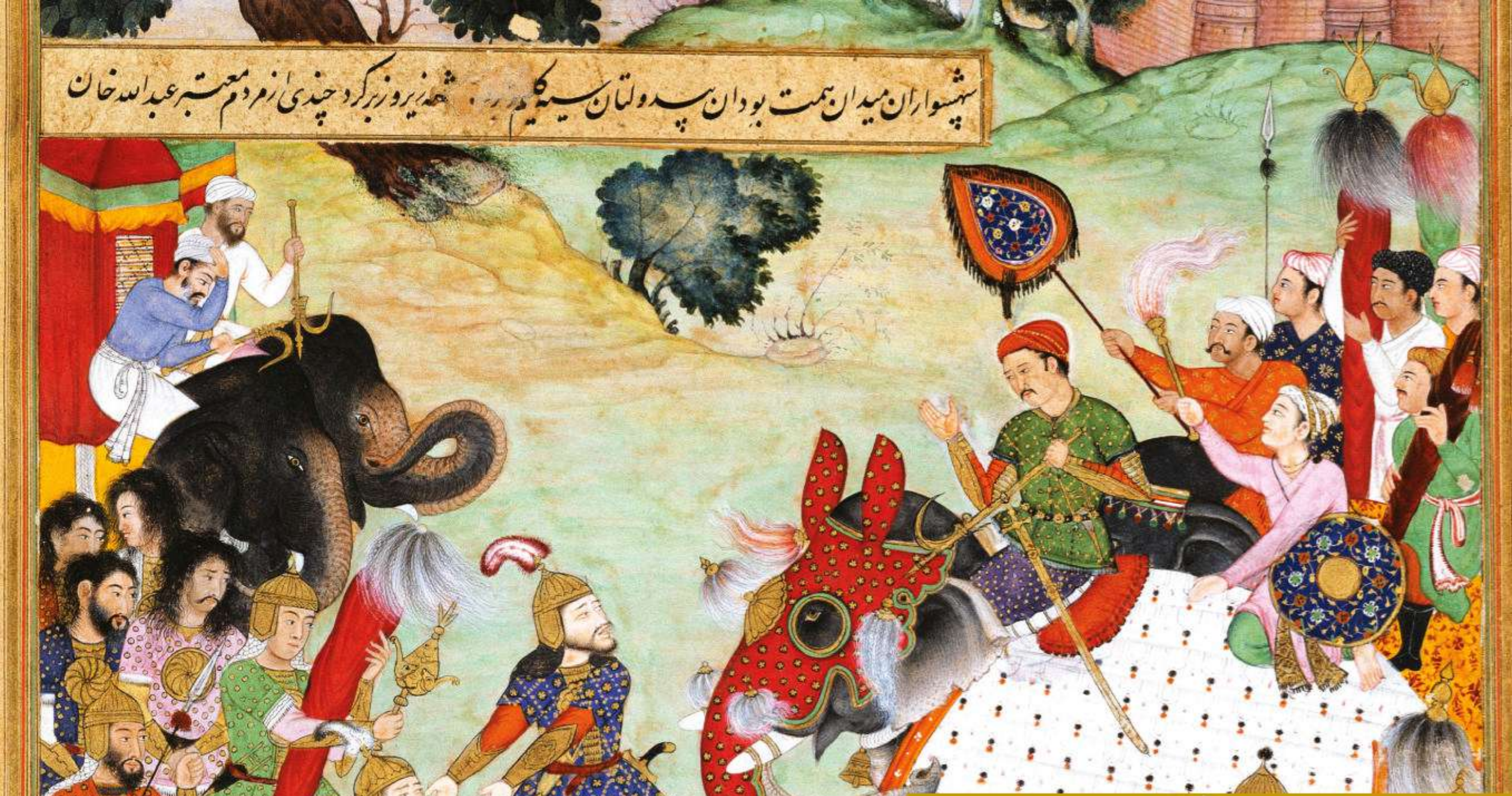
Time and again Shivaji proved he could best Afghan commanders, and his military career offered ample proof of this. Indeed, it was another Hindu, and a Rajput at that, who came closest to defeating him. This was Mirza Raja Jai Singh, who led a Mughal army into Maharashtra and trapped Shivaji in the Purandar citadel in 1665. Rather than attempt an escape, Shivaji's appetite for risk prevailed and he negotiated with his foe. The arrangement was so agreeable, and Shivaji's position so helpless, that the Marathas even joined a brief Mughal campaign in the Deccan. But knowing the troublesome nature of Shivaji, Emperor Aurangzeb arranged for a conference in Delhi with the Maratha leader. What followed was Shivaji's greatest trick, and, once again, it did not involve a battle.

Becoming increasingly paranoid of house arrest and losing touch with his family, Shivaji feigned an illness and refused to leave his quarters. With the connivance of sympathetic doctors and his son Sambhaji, an escape was organised and he managed to avoid scrutiny by being carried in a


The arch-nemesis of Shivaji, the Emperor Aurangzeb, who assumed the throne in 1658, spent his reign embroiled in territorial wars


LEFT Descended from a Rajput bloodline, Jai Singh I enjoyed the distinction of having brought Shivaji to heel and arranged for his temporary surrender

BELOW
Golconda, seat of power for the Qutb Shah dynasty, defied the encroachments of Maratha and Mughal alike


شهسواران میدان همت بودان پہ دولتان سیکلم ... شه زیروزبر گرد چندی از مردم معتبر عبدالله خان

ABOVE This dazzling print from the *Akbarnama*, the life story of the Emperor Akbar (the great-grandfather of Aurangzeb), depicts the use of cavalry in 16th-century warfare. The same tactics endured until the time of Shivaji a century later

RIGHT
The life and legend of Shivaji endures as a starting point for Indian nationalism that rejects any foreign rule over Hindu lands

large food container. It took days before his absence was noticed, much to Aurangzeb's fury. Shivaji's escape might have been one for the history books, but it also added to the Mughal court's growing list of problems. By the 1670s the empire was wracked by fruitless wars in the Afghan frontier and other local revolts. Aurangzeb himself, obstinate and increasingly leaning on the Islamic faith as a tool for governance, alienated the Rajput clans and fought a civil war against them.

The sum of these crises proved a boon for the Marathas. With their homeland secure, Shivaji and his hand-picked loyalists established themselves in the fortress of Raigad and made it the capital for a new country. In keeping with his past escapades and risky exploits, Shivaji, now getting on in years, devoted himself to nation-building. In 1674, he began the project known as the Hindavi Swarajya and declared himself an emperor in Hindu fashion, becoming the Chhatrapati Shivaji. This form of government was not an ideal but a functioning state based in Raigad that involved the leader's personal office, a treasury, the court, tax collection and the armed forces. Feeling secure in his position, Shivaji directed the Maratha state's resources towards the conquest of the weakening Bijapur Sultanate. However, the campaign was a last hurrah. To his dismay his own son Sambhaji defected to the Mughals and joined forces with the Afghan general Diler Khan. Meanwhile, Bijapur held fast and Shivaji now had to contend with his own brother, who stood against him.

Shivaji passed away in 1680, and his heir, the estranged Sambhaji, assumed control of a Maratha state that was collapsing. Sambhaji met a tragic end as his dalliance with the Mughals led to his betrayal and execution. On the other hand, the elderly Aurangzeb continued to send his armies to the Deccan until they overran Golconda in 1687 and secured the greatest reach of the empire. Aurangzeb himself passed away in 1707 having spent his waning years reflecting on Quranic texts and philosophy – the empire he fought so hard to enlarge was now bankrupt and seething with unrest. Despite its early success, the Maratha swarajya organised by Shivaji had little staying power amid the turmoil of the Deccan's chronic territorial disputes. Eventually, a series of pointless wars in the 1700s against the conniving East India Company proved a mortal blow to the Maratha's cohesion. Starting in 1668, it was on the western coast of Maharashtra where the EIC built its own metropolis on a small island. The rise of colonial Bombay on the edge of the Maratha homeland had a significance beyond what the British imagined.

The memory of Chhatrapati Shivaji gained relevance in the late 19th century as local nationalists in Maharashtra evoked his Hindavi Swarajya as a counter-argument to the Raj's smothering governance. The legend and memory kept growing from there, with the first Shivaji Jayanti (a commemorative festival) taking place in 1870, just over a decade after the bloodshed of the Indian Mutiny', and statues of the ruler emerged by the 1920s. Indian nationalism cannot be understood without recognising the importance of Shivaji as a martial icon, a politician and a historical argument for championing a national heritage in the face of foreign domination.

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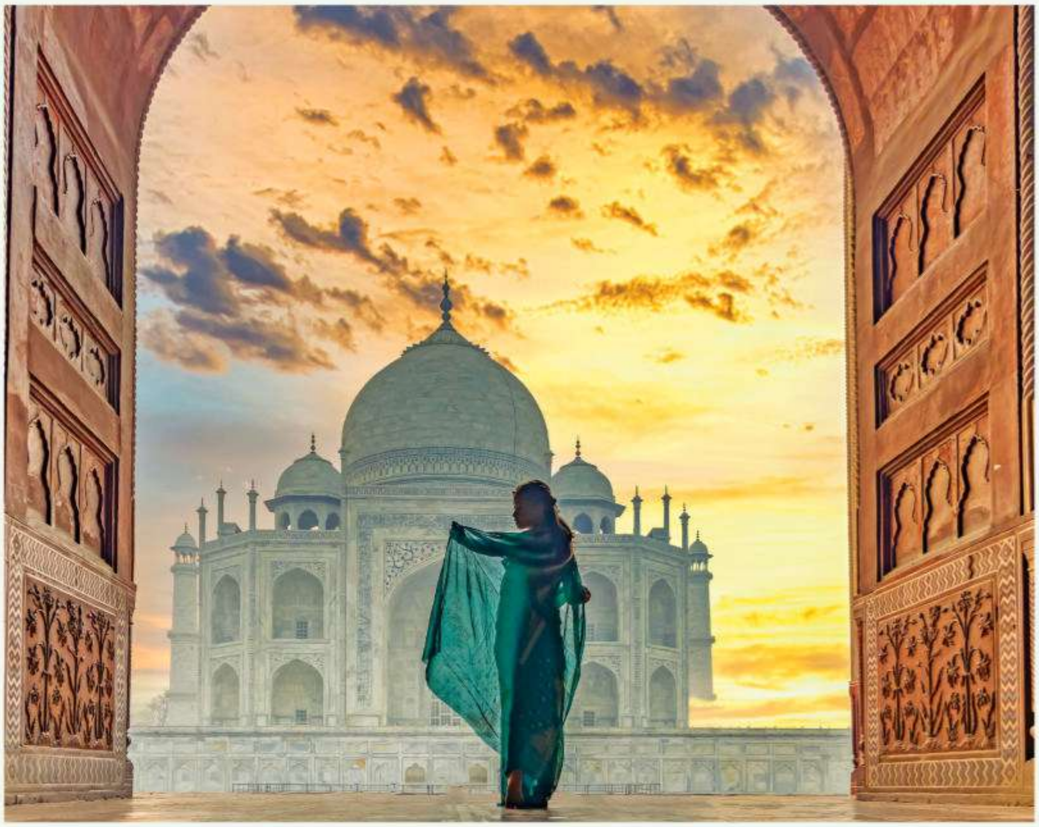
THE LAND ALL DESIRE TO SEE

From its mesmerising festivals and mouth-watering food to its towering temples and captivating dances, India is a vibrant, pulsating world of colour and culture unlike anywhere else on Earth

Written by Bee Ginger

To capture the beauty of India in a few introductory words is impossible - for this land is vibrant, chaotic, spiritual, dynamic and above all diverse. Blessed with a rich and colourful culture shaped by thousands of years of history, it is almost a world within one country. The birthplace of four major religions and home to six seasons (spring, summer, monsoon, autumn, winter and prevernal), India is a melting pot of people and faiths, its cities a mosaic of old and new. Here, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs live side by side with Buddhists, Jains and Chrisitians, all of them free to practise their beliefs and celebrate their deities. While tensions do occasionally flare up, India is a tolerant, diverse place, and all the more interesting for it.

Whether it be the intricate familial structures that bind communities together, the festivals and games that set the rhythm of life, or the delicious and varied cuisines that promise exotic tastes and textures and traditional recipes dating back centuries, India is a uniquely fascinating place, its singular essence perhaps best illustrated here by the praise of American writer Mark Twain: "[India is] the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for all the shows of all the rest of the globe combined."



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FAMILY MATTERS

Home life in India can only be described as a family affair. It is common for the entire family to live together under one roof, and this set up often includes many generations, from grandparents down to great grandchildren and a good sprinkling of additional relatives to boot. In Hindu households, the head of the family is called the karta, a senior male or female figure tasked with making all decisions on behalf of the family, including financial ones, with all income going into a collective pot for the benefit of all. Hierarchy is clearly observed, with family members deferring to their elders and respecting both the patriarch and matriarch of the family. Indian society is collectivistic, with great emphasis on interdependence and loyalty.

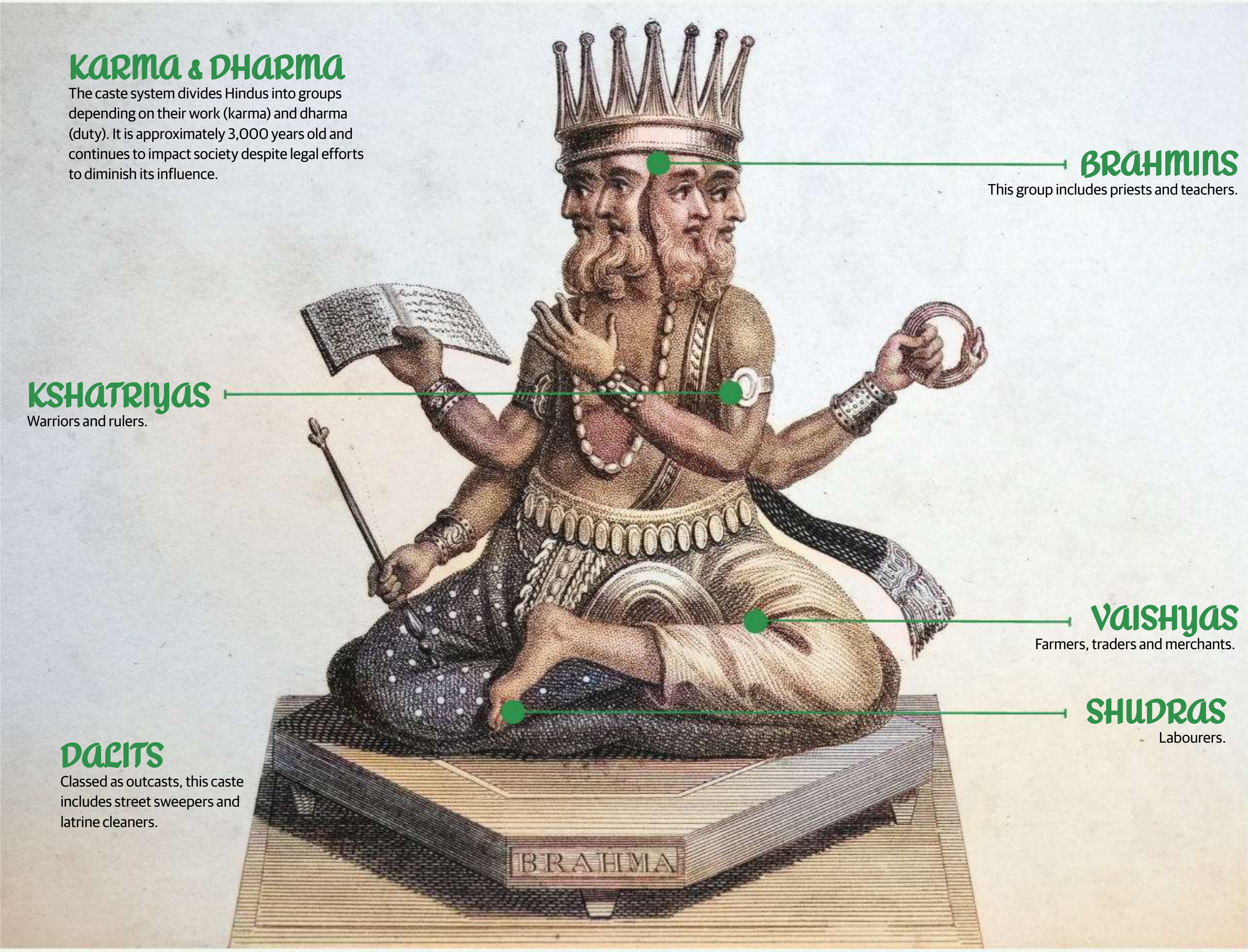
Despite the fact that a woman can be head of the family, gender inequality remains a factor in many places, and there are still particular situations where women will be segregated from men. This is known as purdah and it's prevalent across swathes of South Asia and practised in Hindu and Muslim families. Traditionally women were only permitted to leave the home when accompanied by a man, and when doing so they must cover their head with a headscarf or veil. The same often applied when a woman is in the company of older male relatives. There are of course variations between these practices depending on religion, social background, caste and ethnicity, but many traditional families still observe this practice even today.

When it comes to uniting two families, arranged marriage, which dates back to 1500-500 BCE, is practised in many places. Religion and region both play a big part in the union, with introductions made through a matchmaker or trusted third party. However, it is also more commonplace nowadays for individuals to be informed of their match prior to the wedding in order for them to give consent.

Caste considerations are key too, and endogamous marriages (marrying within a religion, caste or social group) are common. Family honour, geographic location and the desire to protect the family's land, property and economic resources are all contributing factors as well.

Weddings are an elaborate affair that can span a number of days and feature a myriad of traditional customs. These can include mehndi, whereby the bride is decorated in elaborate henna patterns; saptapadi, which involves the bride and groom taking seven steps around a holy fire while making a vow with each step, becoming officially married on the seventh and final step; and aashirwad, a ceremony during which elders from both families impart wisdom to the new couple. Taking a husband's surname is a convention originally introduced by the British. Surnames often reflect caste, family or the village where someone was born. Names are intentionally chosen for their specific and sometimes astrological meaning. In the Sikh community there is a tradition for men to have Singh, meaning 'lion', and women Kaur ('princess, lioness'), in their name.

As with most things in life, Indian families will often eat their meals together. In the past it was common for men and children to eat first before the women then joined them, but in recent times there has been a drive to encourage women to eat with their families



KARMA & DHARMA

The caste system divides Hindus into groups depending on their work (karma) and dharma (duty). It is approximately 3,000 years old and continues to impact society despite legal efforts to diminish its influence.

BRAHMINS

This group includes priests and teachers.

KSHATRIYAS

Warriors and rulers.

VAISHYAS

Farmers, traders and merchants.

SHUDRAS

Labourers.

DALITS

Classed as outcasts, this caste includes street sweepers and latrine cleaners.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system in India is a social structure that divides different groups into categories. These are ranked from high to low, thereby affording some castes a greater social status than others. Caste identities are of great significance, particularly in relation to marriage, with few marriages deviating from their own caste. The system comes from ancient Sanskrit texts that refer to dividing people into individual social groups. Originally there were four principal classes: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras - the Brahmins being the most prestigious, the Shudras the least. It is believed that these groups originated from the Hindu god of creation himself, Brahma. Brahmins were predominantly intellectuals, teachers and priests believed to have descended from Brahma's head. Next came the Kshatriyas, great warriors and rulers who supposedly came from his arms. They were followed by the Vaishyas, traders and farmers who were said to have been created from Brahma's thighs. Last came the Shudras, who dwelled at the Brahma's feet and were tasked with all the menial jobs. These castes were then further divided into sub castes based on specific occupations. In addition to these numerous castes there are the Dalits, or 'the untouchables', dalit meaning 'broken' or 'scattered'. To this day, the Dalit class is the victim of discrimination and violence. This incredibly complex hierarchy has dictated almost every aspect of Hindu life, with each individual group adhering to their place. Rural communities in particular have long lived in segregated colonies, not even sharing food or drink or using the same water wells. This remained unchanged for many centuries, in essence keeping people trapped in a particular social order with no opportunity to escape. Privileges were bestowed on the upper castes, leading to the repression of the lower castes by these more privileged groups. It was the British colonial rulers who tried to simplify the system by using a census in order to create a single society, making the country easier to govern. After gaining independence, India banned any discrimination on the basis of caste in its 1950 constitution.

In modern India the influence of caste has somewhat declined, particularly in the more built-up areas, with castes living and working side by side. However, caste identities continue to remain strong in places, with many last names a clear indication of which caste an individual belongs to.

© Getty Images, Alamy

A mother prepares a traditional breakfast of chapati for her children at their village home on an outdoor fire stove, which is a common way to prepare meals

AN EXPLOSION OF FLAVOUR

When it comes to food, most will agree that Indian cuisine is one of the most exciting around. Indians take great pleasure and pride in their food, with each region proudly offering a signature dish, ingredient and distinct style of cooking.

The history of Indian cuisine is extensive, with traditions rooted in religious beliefs and social customs and heavily influenced by the territories that invaded the country, bringing with them their own traditions and flavours. Food lores vary by religion and region and are often orally passed down through the generations. Hindus, for example, do not eat beef, as ancient Vedic scriptures state that cows must be cared for and protected, making it a sin to kill a cow or eat its meat. Muslims are forbidden from consuming pork, which is why goat and lamb can be found in many dishes. Jains are strict vegetarians who also avoid consuming root vegetables including potatoes, garlic and onion in order not to disturb small insects. Many Indians also abstain from drinking alcohol for religious or cultural reasons.

Most Indians eat with their hands (their right hand specifically), and doing so is seen to be a sensory experience with its roots in the practices of ayurveda, an ancient medicine system. It's believed that the fingers are an extension of the five elements, and by eating with your bare hands you are stimulating these elements and creating essential digestive juices. Hindu texts also reinforce the benefits of eating in this fashion, as in addition to feeding your body you are also nourishing your mind and spirit, and by eating slowly one can savour each mouthful and aid digestion.

Before eating a meal, some Hindus will first offer food to the gods. The food offered to the heavens is called naivedya (sacred food), and when it is returned by the gods it is called prasada. This ritual is considered to be a medium of sacrifice. Tasting food, even during preparation, is forbidden, but once it has been offered it is considered to have been blessed and is ready to enjoy.

Meals will often be served in the style of thali, where the diner can enjoy a range of different foods on a plate separated by smaller compartments. Sharing food is customary, and food wastage is seriously frowned upon, as is leaving anything on your plate, as this is deemed to be a sign of great disrespect to the chef. When leaving the table it is important to wait for the eldest of the group to get up first, and while licking your fingers is unacceptable, belching is viewed as an act of satisfaction and a compliment to the cook and their excellent food.

Many herbs, flowers and spices are not only used for flavour, aroma and decoration but also for their beneficial healing properties

© Getty Images

FAITH AND FESTIVITIES

Famous the world over as a haven of spirituality, India is home to over 1 billion Hindus, around 204 million Muslims, just under 21 million Sikhs and approximately 8.5 million Buddhists. Therefore it's no surprise to learn that religious festivals are a critical part of life in this diverse country. The majority of festivals are based around the lunar calendar, meaning festivals may take place on different days each year, each one with its own rituals and customs. No matter the occasion, Indians love an excuse to sing, dance and celebrate.

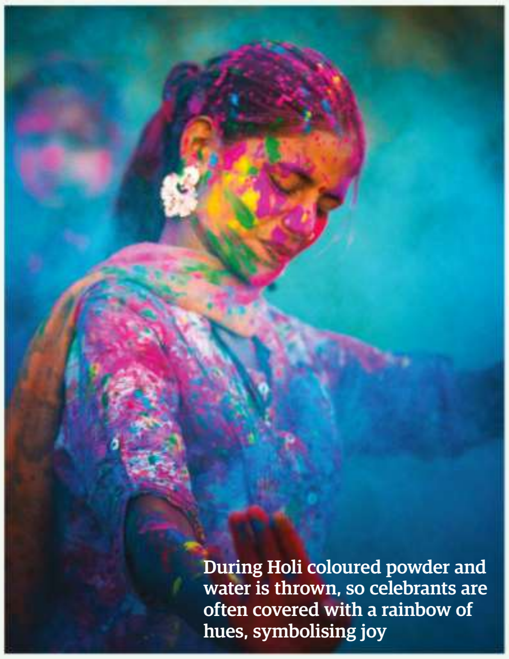
Diwali is the festival of light and is celebrated with the lighting of lanterns, the wearing of new clothes, and feasting

DIWALI

Diwali is arguably the festival that is mostly widely recognised by those outside of India. This festival of lights is a celebration enjoyed by young and old and is a time to meet with friends and family and feast on special foods specific to each region. Usually lasting five or six days, Diwali marks the victory of light over darkness (hence the lighting of lanterns) and is connected to a wealth of divine figures and events, including Lord Krishna killing the demon Narakasur, the homecoming of Lord Rama after a 14-year exile, and the birthday of the goddess Lakshmi. People will often sport new clothes during Diwali, which is a Hindu festival that is also observed in different ways by other religions.

HOLI

Holi is a vibrant Hindu celebration. Held around the time of the spring equinox on the last day of the full moon, this colourful festival is a time to hail the end of winter and celebrate the joys of love, fertility and new life. As with many other festivals, Holi involves a lot of singing and dancing, but what makes it unique is the throwing of coloured water and powder paints in every colour imaginable. Each colour has a significant meaning, including red for love and fertility, yellow for happiness, and green for peace, and once the powder starts to fly everyone's loose white clothing, worn to symbolise purity and peace, quickly takes on a different hue.



During Holi coloured powder and water is thrown, so celebrants are often covered with a rainbow of hues, symbolising joy

The elephant-headed deity Ganesha is celebrated at Ganesh Chaturthi. Submerging a figure of him in water destroys bad luck

GANESH CHATURTHI

Held at different times every year depending on the lunar cycle, Ganesh Chaturthi marks the birthday of the elephant-headed Lord Ganesha. During this ten-day festival clay murtis (representations of Ganesha) are placed in people's homes and in prominent positions in public places on temporary stages. Fasting and chanting are elements of the festival, as is the giving out of sweets. The final day of festivities is marked with a parade of giant effigies of the deity led by jubilant worshippers beating drums and dancing in the streets as they head towards the sea or another body of water. Once there they immerse the sacred figure in the water so that Ganesha can return to the heavens. It's also believed that submerging a murti destroys a household's problems.

Kumbh Mela is the ultimate expression of the sacred nature of river water

KUMBH MELA

Taking place every 12 years in the northern Indian city of Prayagraj, Kumbh Mela draws millions of pilgrims from across India to the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and Sarasvati rivers (the 2019 Kumbh Mela saw 120 million people converging on the banks of the rivers in the largest recorded peaceful human gathering in history). Believing that water will rid all sin and help to protect against future evils, bathers take to the water in droves, with all manner of people, from monks and hermits to city workers and tourists, descending from every corner of India in the name of holiness, many of them staying in a huge tent city erected for visitors.

The attendance of the sadhus (monks) is one of the biggest attractions of the festival as they come to give lectures, blessings and perform prayers. Away from the water, there are fairs and drum processions to enjoy, as well as separate mass gatherings to attend where prayers are read.

The timing of Kumbh Mela is dictated by Hindu astrology, and every six years an Ardha (half) Kumbh Mela is held. The next full version of this stunning festival will be celebrated in 2025.

The Pushkar Fair in Rajasthan is one of the largest and oldest in India, today attracting over 200,000 visitors to the area

PUSHKAR FAIR

Beginning in the Hindu calendar month of Kartik and ending in late October or early November, the Pushkar Fair in rural Rajasthan is a sight to behold. Attracting around 200,000 visitors to the small desert town of Pushkar, an important pilgrimage site for Hindus and Sikhs, the event is one of the largest camel, horse and cattle fairs in India. There are fetes, dances, tug-of-war and longest moustache competitions, camel races and even a camel beauty pageant to see. And if that wasn't enough, should they wish to, visitors can of course purchase their own hump-backed companion from the roughly 50,000 that trek to the fair.

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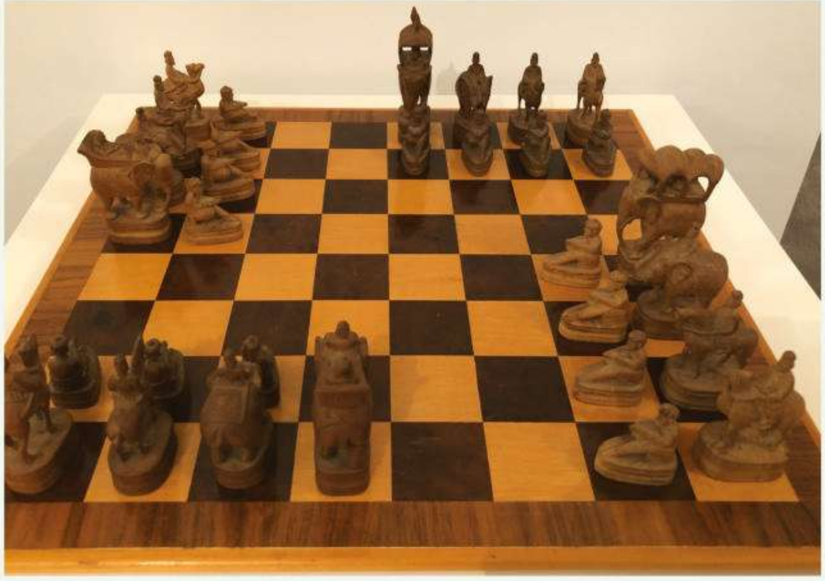
ENTERTAINING INDIA

From ancient arts such as puppetry and dance to their love of cricket, Indians enjoy a plethora of intriguing pastimes.

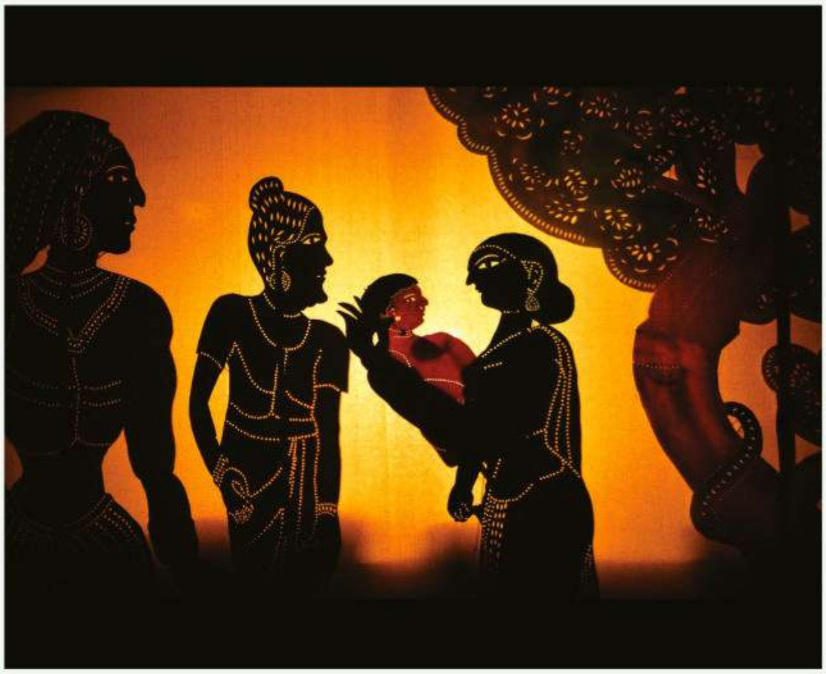


CHESS

A popular game that originated in India is chess, which dates back to the 6th century CE and was an offshoot of the game chaturanga (see the board above). The earliest known pieces were based on primarily military elements and included a chariot, elephant, horse, infantry, a king and even a vizier. Declared a sport in 1999, chess has become increasingly popular in India due to the success of Grandmaster Viswanatahn Anand, a five-time world champion.

DANCE

Indian dance is at the forefront of a number of festivals, celebrations and of course Bollywood. It has a rich cultural background and originated as a language of expression, with roots dating back to Sanskrit text. Said to have been used to entertain and awe the deities, there are numerous styles of Indian dance, eight of which have been granted classical status by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, a government body that oversees performing arts in India. By far the most popular (and best-known by foreigners) is Bharatanatyam, a dance that is traditionally performed solo by a woman to the accompaniment of a tanpura, a stringed instrument invented in India.

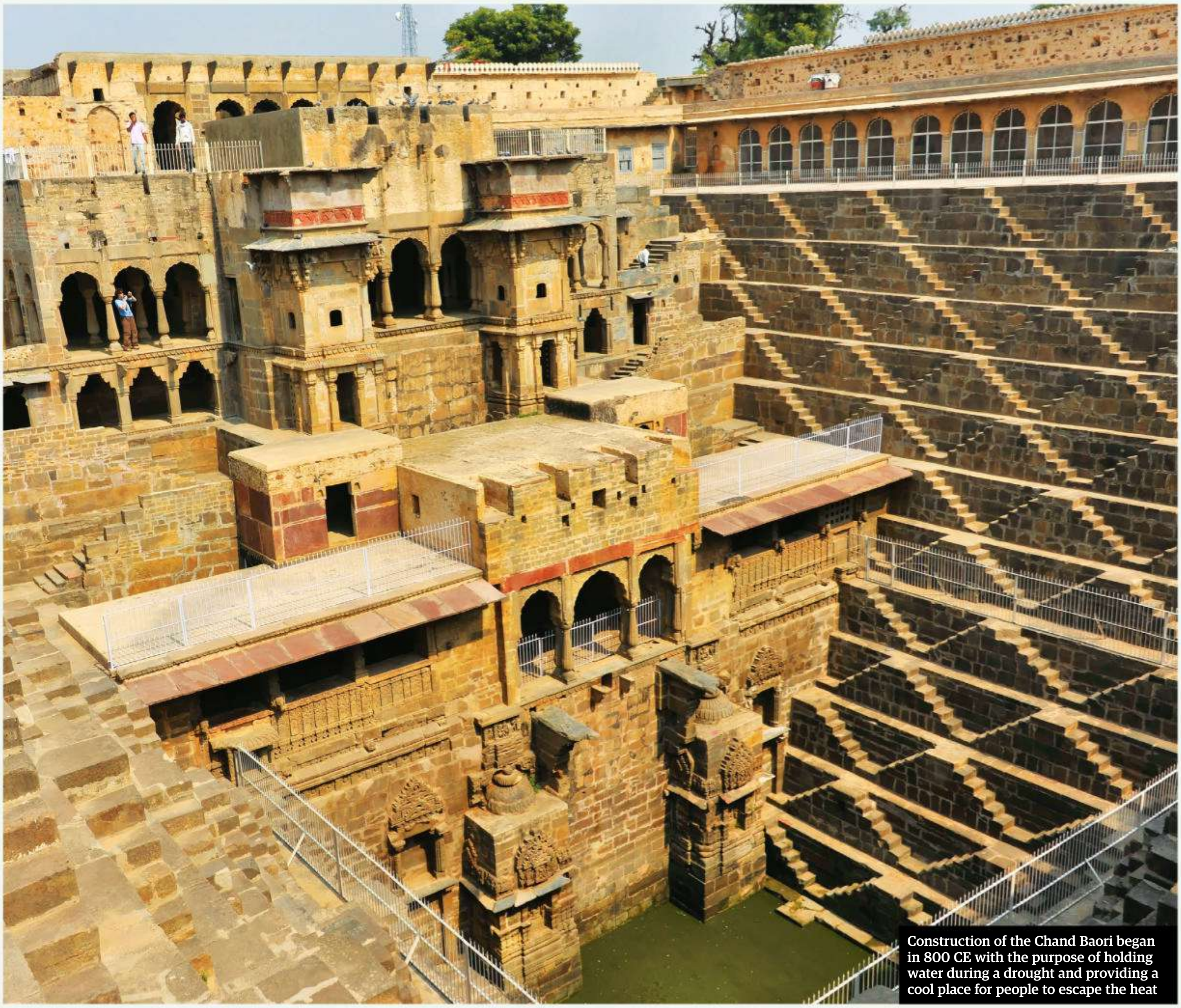


SHADOW PUPPETRY

Shadow puppetry has been used to tell stories across the world for millennia, and India is no exception. Performed on stages connected to Hindu temples or more temporary platforms during festivals, this skilled artform is mentioned in ancient Sanskrit texts. Once feared to have become extinct, it has been kept alive in many rural communities and continues to be used to relay Hindu epics.

CRICKET

Sports fans will know just how much Indians adore cricket. Introduced by the British in the 1700s, the game found a captive audience in Asia, and it was seen by many as a good way to assimilate wildly different cultures. India has since produced some of the finest batsmen and bowlers the sport has ever seen, chief among them Sachin Tendulkar. In 2007, the Indian Premier League was launched, rapidly becoming the most popular and lucrative cricket league in the world, being valued at $10.9 billion.



Construction of the Chand Baori began in 800 CE with the purpose of holding water during a drought and providing a cool place for people to escape the heat

TEMPLES AND TOWERS

Indian architecture can be traced back 5,000 years to settlements in the Indus Valley, and with 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites to its name, it is a goldmine when it comes to exploring architectural evolution. With its rich and diverse cultural history and inhabitants hailing from numerous religions and regions, it is clear to see how differing cultures have impacted Indian architecture throughout history. Cave, Mughal, Dravidian and Sikh are a few of the examples of styles that have contributed to the wealth of breathtaking structures found across India.

Another more modern building that also symbolises love is the Lotus Temple, a Baha'i place of worship in New Delhi that comprises 27 petals aligned to create a circular periphery. It stands for openness and secularism and encourages all religions to visit and worship there. Typically, temples are built in one of three distinct styles: Dravida, which is a southern style; Nagara, a northern style; and Vesara, a more mixed style.

One of the most impressive examples of Dravidian architecture is the Sun Temple in Konark on the Bay of Bengal coast. The advanced craftsmanship is apparent in the intricately crafted form of seven horses leading behind them a giant chariot on twelve wheels. Equally remarkable is the Amber Fort near Jaipur, a hill fort built in 1592 in Rajput style from marble and red sandstone. The design is highly advanced, with a ventilation system and permanent water source. It is a brilliant example of Rajasthan's rich cultural heritage. Both light and water are often incorporated into Indian structures alongside elements of culture, heritage and religion. Its unique styles and forms are apparent across the country in fortresses, temples, monuments and even enormous step wells, such as the Chand Baori. Completed around the year 900 CE, it features 3,500 steps that descend over 30 metres (100 feet) into the arid ground, making it one of the largest stepwells in all of India.

© Getty Images, Alamy. Chaturaji, Mullookkaaran (CC, Wikipedia)

A BLOODY ENTERPRISE

The East India Company redefined overseas commerce for England, but also caused great harm… How does its reputation stand up today?

Written by Bob Smith

Stroll into the India Office Records at the British Library on Euston Road in London and you'll encounter a large archive of records from the East India Company, which existed from 1600 to 1874, as well as documents pertaining to the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India (1784–1858), the India Office (1858–1947) and other overseas agencies.

While the professional researchers among us would spend a profitable few hours digging through this array of records, the rest of us would probably be left with a confused - if vivid - overall picture of the history of the East India Company (EIC). This is hardly surprising; the company's 258-year modus operandi of bloody exploitation and amoral empire-building is so self-contradictory and chaotic that scholars will be arguing about its true legacy for decades to come.

The first impetus towards the establishment of a potential East Indies venture came on 22 September 1599, those records tell us, when a group of merchants and explorers met in London to discuss this new opportunity. The meeting included the seafarers James Lancaster and Ralph Fitch, the Lord Mayor of London, Stephen Soame, a pro-colonial writer called Richard Hakluyt, the politician Thomas Smythe, and sea adventurers who had sailed with Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh.

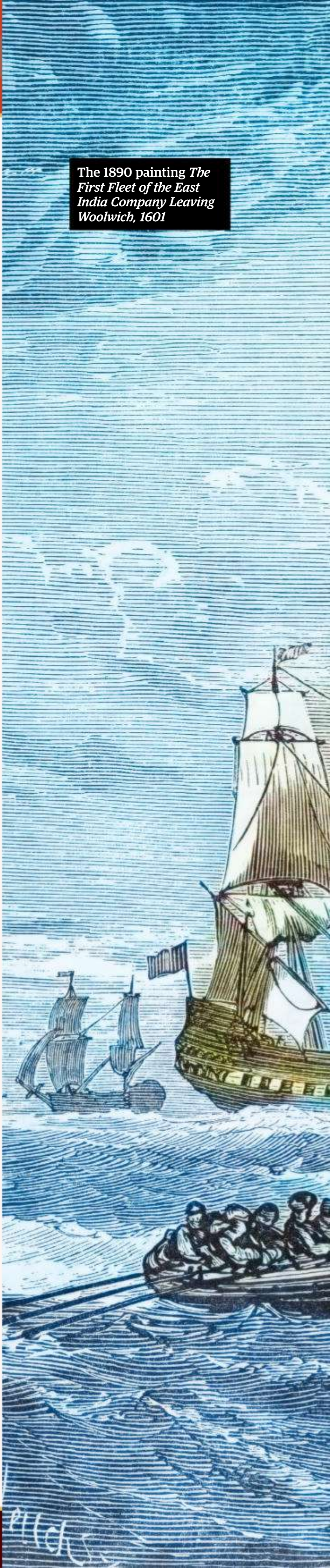
The concept of the new venture didn't emerge from a vacuum: journeys to the East by the aforementioned Drake from 1577 to 1580 had raised large sums of money, and Raleigh had seized Spanish and Portuguese ships from those countries' trade routes. Lancaster himself had sailed in 1591 to India with the permission of Elizabeth I, preying on vessels from the same competing nations.

Pledging an investment of £68,373 (more than £8 million today), the group equipped themselves with ships, and on receiving the royal charter in December 1600, the new East India Company was established. The charter awarded the EIC a monopoly on trade in any country east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of the Straits of Magellan for the next 15 years, with Smythe as company governor leading a court of directors. Meetings took place at the Nags Head Inn in Bishopsgate or at Smythe's own home, before a headquarters, East India House, was established in Leadenhall Street.

The first voyage took place in 1601, with Lancaster sailing *Red Dragon*: the commander wrested a 1,088-tonne carrack, *Sao Thome*, from Portuguese traders. Its cargo of peppers and spices allowed the EIC to establish two trading posts in Bantam, Java, and in the Moluccas, or 'Spice Islands' - now the Maluku archipelago in Indonesia. Returning to England in 1603, Lancaster was knighted by the new monarch James I. Subsequent journeys under Sir Henry Middleton, General William Keeling, Alexander Sharpeigh and other seafarers ensued and witnessed battles with Dutch and Portuguese competitors in the Indian Ocean. After defeating the latter in 1612 at the Battle of Swally in Surat, the company asked the Crown to assist with establishing a presence in mainland India.

Given an indefinite charter to operate by James I, the EIC first started to explore trade in Japan. Captain John Saris landed the ship *Clove* there in 1613 and secured the necessary permission from the country's ruling shogun, Tokugawa Hidetada, whose official permission read in part: "We give free licence to the subjects of the King of Great Britain… to tarry here as long as they think good, and to depart at their pleasure." A decade of business in Hirado and Nagasaki did not prove to be successful, however, and the EIC withdrew in 1623.

A diplomatic mission by James I's envoy Sir Thomas Roe in 1615 to the Indian monarch, the Mughal Emperor Nur-ud-din Salim Jahangir, proved to be decisive, with Jahangir writing to the English crown: "Upon which


The 1890 painting *The First Fleet of the East India Company Leaving Woolwich, 1601*

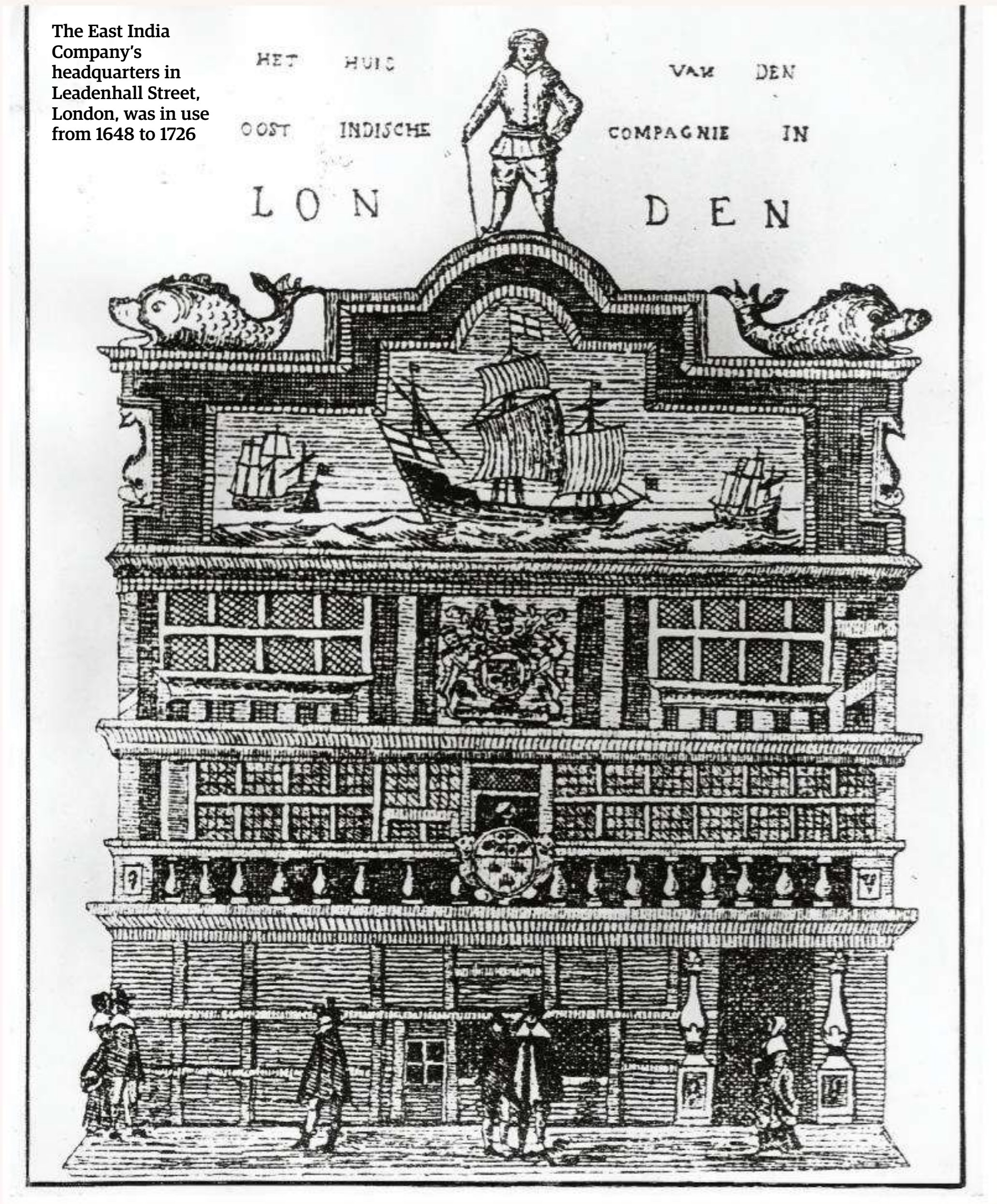
© Getty Images, Alamy

assurance of your royal love I have given my general command to all the kingdoms and ports of my dominions to receive all the merchants of the English nation… I desire your Majesty to command your merchants to bring in their ships of all sorts of rarities and rich goods fit for my palace."

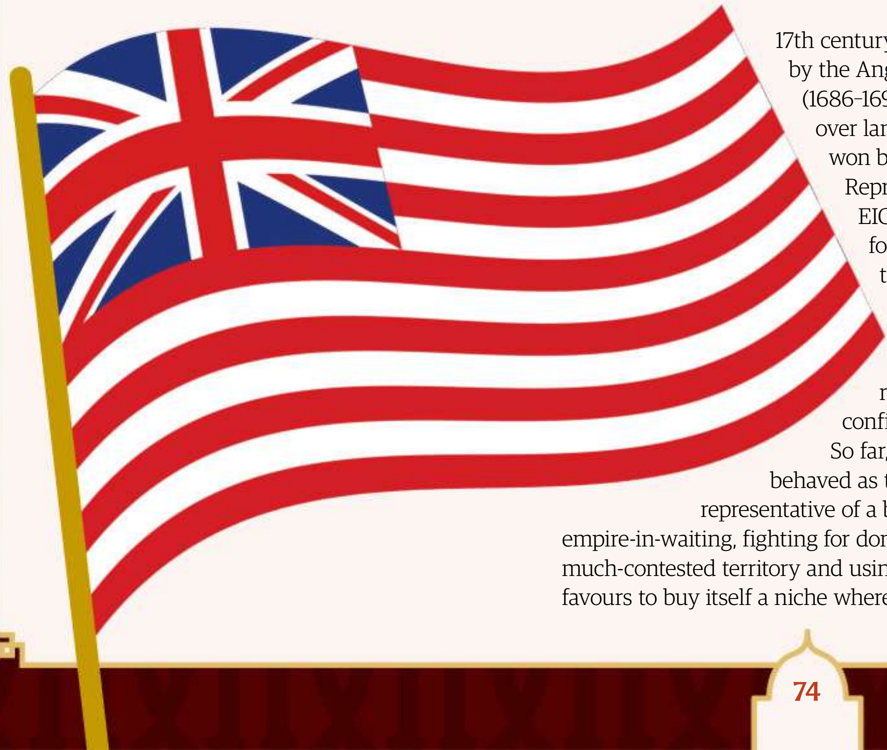
Establishing factories in 1611 in the Bay of Bengal and in 1615 at Surat, the EIC began its trade in earnest, bringing exotic spices to England, where it sold them at huge profits. A rival Portuguese concern, Estado da Índia, had footholds in Goa, Chittagong and Bombay - although it lost the last of these to England as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza when she married King Charles II in 1662 - and was regularly involved in skirmishes with its English competitor. In response, the EIC teamed up with the other major power in the region, the Dutch United East India Company, to defeat Portuguese and Spanish ships near China in order to secure ports in that country in what would prove to be a decisive move.

A setback occurred in 1623 with the so-called Amboyna massacre, the result of increasing tensions between the Dutch and English Companies: although a previous treaty between the two nations had been intended to foster their co-operation in the region, mutual distrust led to violence. Agents of the Dutch Company arrested and tortured several of their British counterparts on Ambon Island (now in Indonesia), suspecting them of involvement in a conspiracy. After extracting confessions, the Dutch beheaded 11 of their own men and 10 from the EIC, ending the two nations' co-operation and establishing one of the causes of the First Anglo-Dutch War in 1652.

The English company, lesser in ships and revenue than the Dutch by some distance, was obliged to abandon the Spice Islands and focus on Bengal, where its relationship with the Mughal Empire was secure and profits healthy. Their factories expanded and the flood of Indian goods to England increased, with the remainder of the 17th century only marred by the Anglo-Mughal War (1686-1690), a dispute over land rights that was won by the Mughals. Representatives of the EIC were fined and forced to prostrate themselves before Emperor Aurangzeb in order to regain their confiscated factories.



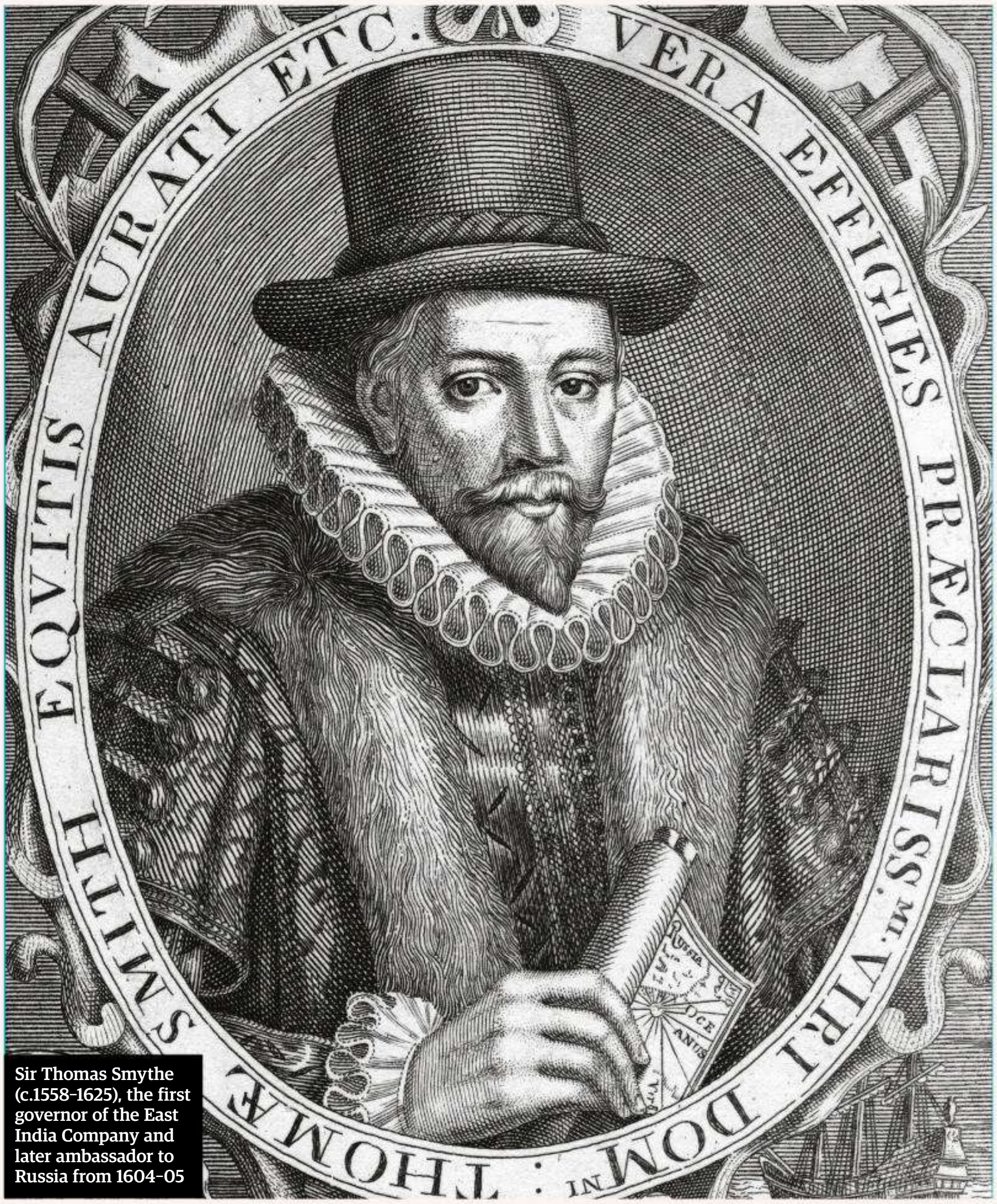
The East India Company's headquarters in Leadenhall Street, London, was in use from 1648 to 1726



So far, the EIC had behaved as the commercial representative of a belligerent empire-in-waiting, fighting for dominance in a much-contested territory and using wealth and favours to buy itself a niche where all-out warfare failed. As such, the Company up to this point might well be judged as neither more nor less morally corrupt than the expansionist regime itself: where that viewpoint obviously changes is when the EIC became an enthusiastic participator in the African slave trade.

Note that the EIC's own archive suggests that its practice of owning, transporting and selling slaves began in 1684, when a Captain Robert Knox purchased 250 slaves in Madagascar and transported them to St. Helena in the Atlantic. Other sources suggest this practice may in fact have started in the early 1620s. In either case, the EIC traded in humans until 1834.

The Company was now unstoppable, its influence boosted by powers granted by King Charles II around 1670 that enabled it to acquire new territory, wage war, mint its own money and - most crucially - to wield legal and military jurisdiction in its occupied zones. This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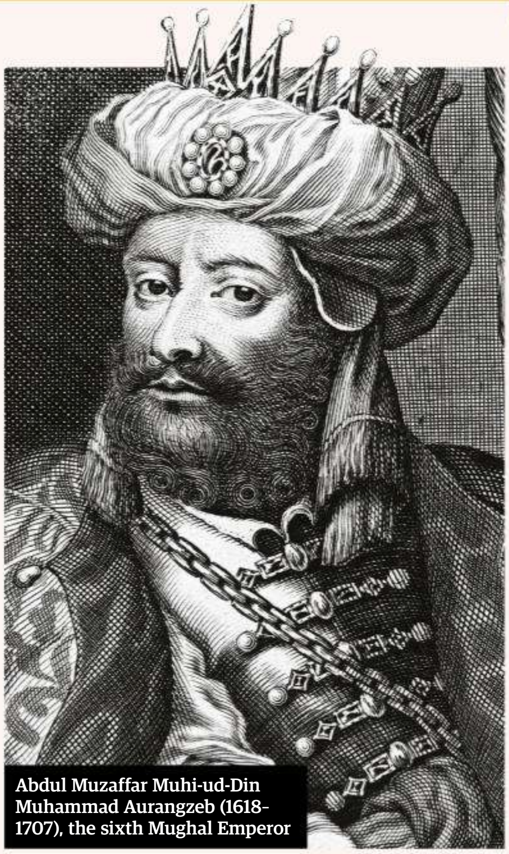
Sir Thomas Smythe (c.1558–1625), the first governor of the East India Company and later ambassador to Russia from 1604–05



Abdul Muzaffar Muhi-ud-Din Muhammad Aurangzeb (1618–1707), the sixth Mughal Emperor

“The Company had a private army of 200,000 highly trained Indian soldiers”

extraordinary award of power meant that when the Mughal Empire fell into chaos in 1707 on the death of Aurangzeb, the EIC was able to insert itself into Bengal as a de facto leader, implement its own legal system and reorganise the country's provinces as it chose. A successful military campaign against France, a rising power in the region, plus a series of local alliances with provincial rulers, kept the EIC in power. How was anyone to resist? The Company eventually had a private army of 200,000 highly trained Indian soldiers known as sepoys, twice as many men as the British Army.

A popular modern consensus is that the East India Company essentially removed the Mughal Empire's accumulated wealth en masse through the 1700s in a wholesale stripping of assets labelled by historian William Dalrymple as “the single largest transfer of wealth until the Nazis”. The country homes of the English aristocracy were filled with Indian jewels, statues and other treasures, and the London stock market oozed money thanks to Indian industries.

Britain's Industrial Revolution was assisted by Indian wealth, whether taken directly from the subcontinent or earned thanks to a system of punitive tariffs. This system meant that India could only profitably buy British-made products while being unable to buy those goods from their own domestic producers. In this way India both supplied British industries and bought from them.

In addition, the EIC began tax-collecting – or tax-farming, where subcontractors collected money on the Company's behalf – after winning two important battles: Plassey in 1757 and Buxar in 1764. The former was won thanks to two important factors: the British kept their gunpowder dry in rainy conditions, and they bribed a traitor, General Mir Jafar, to betray the Nawab of Bengal in return for being given that position himself. These victories compelled Emperor Shah Allam II to appoint the Company as revenue collector in 1765 in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, essentially making it the financial controller of a huge area of India.

Little effort was made by the EIC to relieve a terrible famine that reduced the Bengal population by up to 10 million people in 1769–70, whether through reduced taxation or other means, but the Company's expansion continued apace. Further gains near Bombay and Madras, as well as victories in the Anglo-Mysore Wars (1766–1799) and the Anglo-Maratha Wars (1772–1818) left the EIC virtually unopposed.

This was, in summary, how the East India Company became the de facto ruler of what came to be known as British India – and also where the seeds of its downfall were sown.

After 1773, the EIC took full control of the country, although local noblemen were allowed a degree of self-determination after acknowledging the Company as their masters. In return for

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the services of those rulers – Hindu maharajas and Muslim nawabs who managed their own administrative costs and logistics – their provinces were designated as princely states and offered EIC protection. This attracted the attention of the British Crown, which desired more control over its Indian arm, given extra impetus by the Company's request for an emergency loan of £1 million after the revenue-sapping famine in Bengal.

The prime minister, Lord North, stated that EIC territory would be "better administered by the Crown that is so ill-administered by Directors incapable of governing it" – and subsequent investigations by parliamentary committees led to the Regulating Act of 1773 and then the India Act of 1784, both vehicles for greater home intervention in EIC affairs. A new agreement meant that the Company was now required to pay the British government £40,000 every two years in order to retain political control of its Indian territory.

Tales of the EIC's cruel policies also cropped up in parliamentary discussions, with a Major Henry Munro recounting reports of violent incidents such as a 1764 incident in which rebellious sepoys were tied to the mouths of cannons and shot through: the politician Horace Walpole described the Company as a "crew of monsters" at the time.

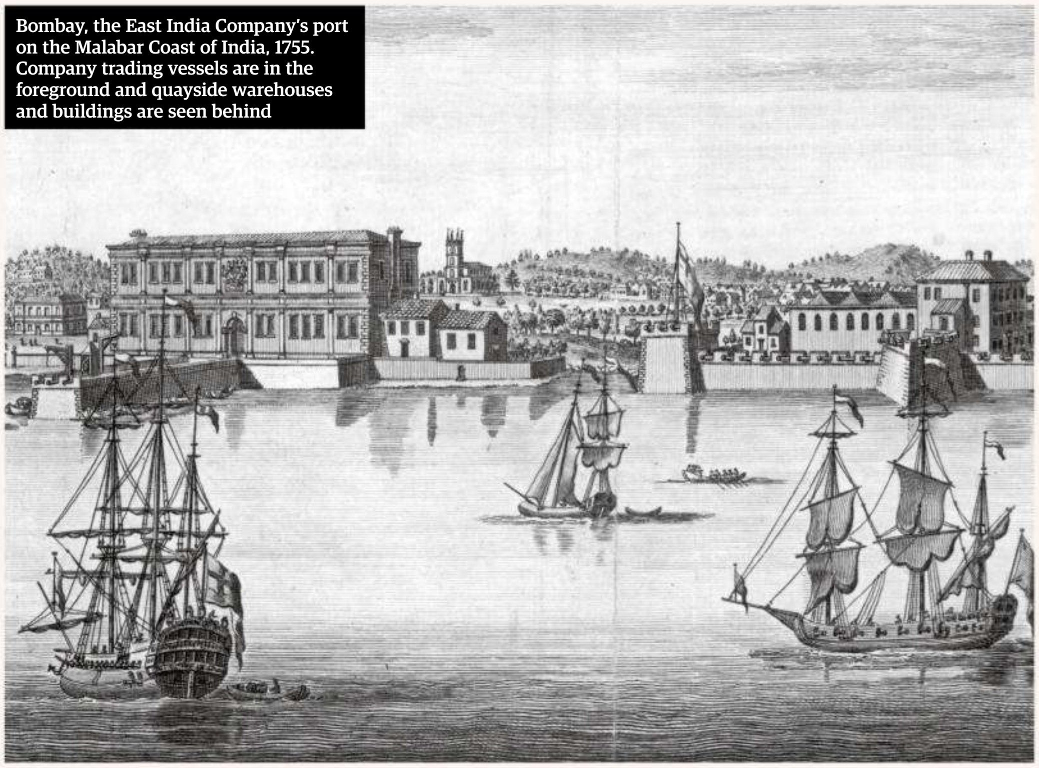
By the 1770s, the EIC was exporting Indian-grown opium to China, despite that country's outright ban on the drug. China's country's Qing dynasty took action, destroying EIC opium stores, which led to the First Opium War of 1839. Britain won the conflict, gaining the island of Hong Kong in the ensuing Treaty of Nanjing of 1842.

More trouble was brewing in India thanks to inefficiencies in the EIC's tax reforms, which led to a serious economic downturn nationwide, and the British cotton mill industry was also complaining to Parliament that Indian imports should be taxed and domestic cotton made profitably exportable to India. Furthermore, the EIC's strategy of building an export business for indigo dye out of India failed – and lost investors considerable sums – when demand in Europe proved unstable.

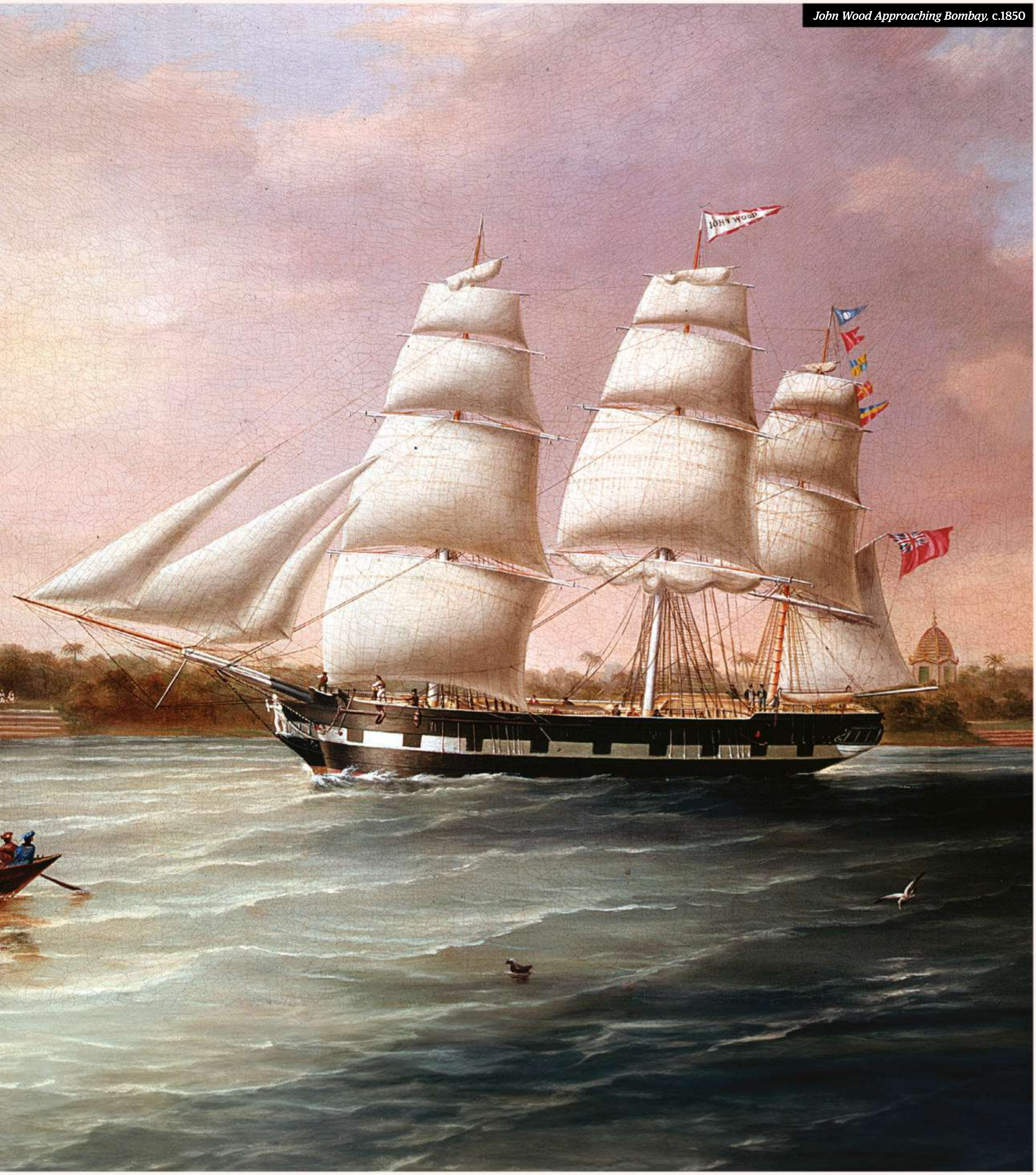
The writing was now on the wall, with London merchants insisting by 1800 that the old, monopoly-gifted EIC – founded in the far-off days of 1600 – was no longer required in the modern era. In response, the Charter Act of 1813 terminated the Company's Indian monopoly, and the Saint Helena Act of 1833 did the same for its China trade, making the EIC simply an agent for the administration of British India. That year, the British Government assumed the debts and obligations of the Company, leaving it as a shadow of its former self, although it lingered on for some decades until it was officially dissolved by Act of Parliament in 1874. The final straw for the East India Company had come 17 years prior to its ultimate demise, as we shall see.

To the modern reader, the East India Company is understandably regarded as a vile enterprise, one reliant on the enslavement and mistreatment of countless people in the name of endless profit. However, it's important to note that criticism of British conduct in India at the time is not the preserve of modern authors. As H.H. Wilson and James Mill wrote in *The History Of British India,* which was published in 1826: "[India] was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced upon her without paying any duty; and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not contend on equal terms."

"Tales of the EIC's cruel policies also cropped up in parliamentary discussions"



Bombay, the East India Company's port on the Malabar Coast of India, 1755. Company trading vessels are in the foreground and quayside warehouses and buildings are seen behind



John Wood Approaching Bombay, c.1850

© Getty Images, Alamy

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

Part of the British Crown Jewels, India's diamond tells a story of bloodshed and deception

Written by Aiden Dalby

Translated from Persian, Koh-i-Noor means the 'diamond of light'. The story and history surrounding the Koh-i-Noor is almost as important as the gemstone itself. The 105-carat oval-shaped diamond is one of the largest in the world and perhaps the most famous and controversial. The gemstone would change hands numerous times in its recorded history, as a trophy of war between Maharajas, Mughal princes, Afghan kings and Iranian rulers, until it landed in British hands, where it is to this day. How it came into the hands of the British royal family is widely disputed.

The Crown of Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother with the Koh-i-Noor seen at the front

The earliest records of the Koh-i-Noor estimated it weighed around 191 carats, and its value was described in the 18th century by an Afghan queen, Wufa Begum, as "If a strong man were to throw four stones, one north, one south, one east, one west, and a fifth stone up into the air, and if the space between them were to be filled with gold, all would not equal the value of the Koh-i-Noor."

There are various myths and legends surrounding the Koh-i-Noor, perhaps as its origins are not truly known. There are stories dating all the way back to 3200 BCE of an extravagant diamond, as well as some records of a large diamond being found around the 1300s, but there is no evidence to suggest that this is the same gemstone. What we do know is that India was for the longest time the world's sole supplier of diamonds. It wasn't until 1726 when diamonds were discovered elsewhere, in Brazil, so we can safely assume that the Koh-i-Noor must have come from India, but when it was found and where in the country it came from has never been clearly recorded.

One of the earliest known records of the Koh-i-Noor comes from the 17th century in Delhi. In 1628, Shah Jahan, the Mughal emperor, ordered the creation of what would come to be known as the Peacock Throne. The royal throne was said to be held up by six large legs and the whole thing covered in gold and adorned in all kinds of gemstones including diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls. The Peacock Throne took seven years to build and cost twice as much as the Taj Mahal. At the top of the throne was a canopy, and sat on top of this were peacocks. The Koh-i-Noor was said to be housed on the head of one of these peacocks. How Shah Jahan came to possess the Koh-i-Noor is still a mystery, but it would remain with the Mughal Empire for over a century.

In 1738, Persian forces led by Nader Shah began to invade northern India and eventually successfully raided Delhi before slaughtering the population and looting everything they could find. Legend has it that Persian forces required 12,000 horses, 4,000 camels and 700 elephants to carry all of their spoils back to what is today the nation of Iran. The Peacock Throne was one of the items taken to Iran before it was dismantled and the various stones that decorated the throne, including the Koh-i-Noor diamond, were removed and incorporated into the Persian crown jewels. This is believed to be the first time the Koh-i-Noor

© Getty Images. Generated by Adobe Firefly AI

diamond was taken from India. When Nader Shah was assassinated his empire plunged into anarchy before collapsing. In time the diamond would find its way into the hands of Ahmad Shah, founder of the Afghan Empire.

The diamond would be encased in an armband and continue to exchange hands, taken as a spoil of war throughout many battles before Shah Shuja, a descendent of Ahmad Shah, claimed it. Shah would ally with Britain and the East India Company to help defend his country against Russia, and it was at this time that the British Empire first became aware of the extravagant and priceless Koh-i-Noor. If Britain could obtain this unique gemstone then it would solidify the country's power in India. Around 1809, Shah was overthrown and forced to flee to Lahore, in what is now Pakistan. As a condition of him being allowed into the country he was to give the diamond to Ranjit Singh and the Sikh Empire.

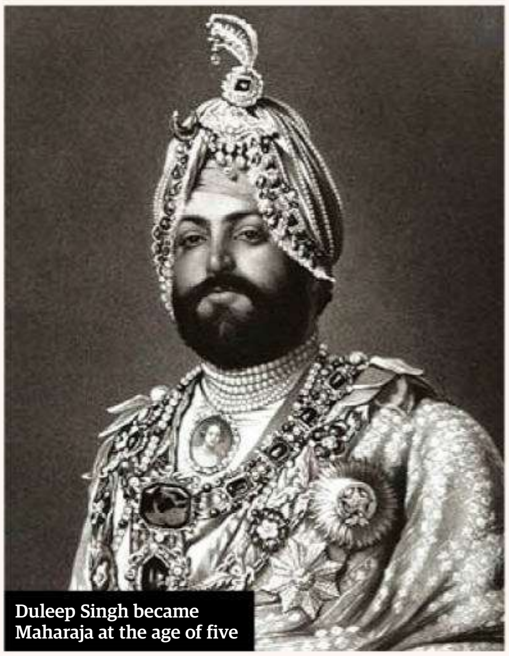
Following the Anglo-Sikh Wars between the Sikh Empire and the British East India Company (waged in 1845–46 and 1848–49 respectively) the Punjab throne passed between several rulers until five-year-old Duleep Singh ascended as Maharaja. The young ruler signed the last treaty of Lahore in 1849 (at which time the boy was ten years old), thereby ending the war and relinquishing several of the country's treasures to the British, including the Koh-i-Noor diamond. This treaty is a continued source of debate. Did the young Maharaja willingly sign it? Did his advisers deceive him into doing so? Was he too young to understand what he was signing away? If his signature was secured via underhanded tactics should the many items taken by the British be returned?

In 1850, the Koh-i-Noor was sealed inside a small iron safe and brought to England to be presented to Queen Victoria at Buckingham palace. The diamond was presented on 3 July to coincide with the East India Company's 250th anniversary. Shortly after arriving in the country, the diamond was displayed during the Great Exhibition at Hyde Park, London. The diamond was inserted into an armlet and presented inside an elaborate birdcage, but it failed to impress those who saw it. The diamond was moved into another case with better lighting to try make it appear more dazzling, but this didn't do much to change opinions. While it was an impressive size, the diamond had many flaws that prevented it from sparkling the way audiences expected it to. Because of the startling reception, Prince Albert, husband to Queen Victoria, employed Dutch diamond merchant Royal Coster to recut the Koh-i-Noor. Artisan Levie Benjamin Voorzanger was tasked with the cutting of the Koh-i-Noor, and the machinery used for the job was custom-built. The process of cutting the diamond took 38 days and cost around £8,000 (just over £900,000 in today's currency). Before the cutting the Koh-i-Noor was around 191 carats: afterwards it weighed 105.6, a reduction of 42 per cent. This vast reduction obviously disappointed some, including Prince Albert, but this was deemed necessary because as Voorzanger worked he discovered more flaws than he anticipated. If the Koh-i-Noor was to better refract light and thereby appear more attractive it would need to be free from flaws. After receiving the new cut of the diamond, Queen Victoria wore it in a brooch until her death in 1901.

For the coronation of Queen Alexandra (wife of King Edward VII) in August 1902, the Koh-i-Noor was taken and set into her crown. It was later moved to the Crown of Queen Mary in 1911 and then finally to Queen Mary's crown in 1937.

KOHINOOR DIAMOND
STOLEN FROM A 10 YEAR OLD SIKH KING
DOWN WITH THE CROWN

An anti-monarchist protestor holds aloft a sign stating that the Koh-i-Noor diamond was stolen during a gathering ahead of the 2024 Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey



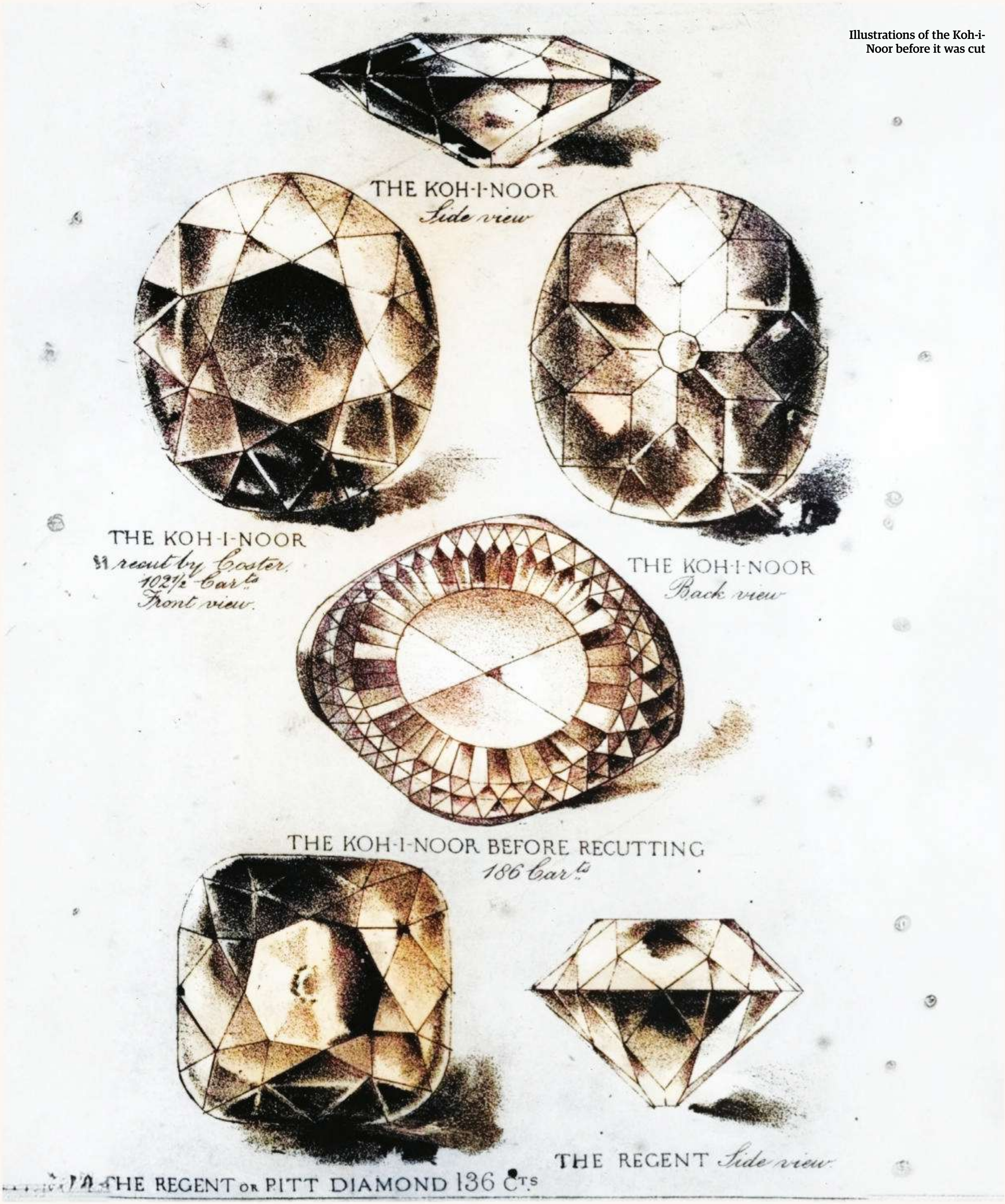
Duleep Singh became Maharaja at the age of five

The last time the diamond made a public appearance was in 2002, when the Queen Mother died and her crown was placed on top of her coffin. The Koh-i-Noor was notably absent during the coronation of Charles III, a decision likely taken in order to avoid diplomatic issues with India. Today the Koh-i-Noor diamond can be seen by anyone, as the crown of Queen Mary and other crown jewels are on display to the public in the Tower of London. The prickly issue of its ownership also remains.

India first requested the diamond's return when the country became independent in 1947, and it followed up with another request in 1953. In more recent times, British Prime Minister David Cameron was asked about the possibility of the diamond returning to its country of origin during a visit to India in 2010. Cameron replied, "If you say yes to one, you suddenly find the British Museum would be emptied" and that the diamond will "have to stay put."

Others have also staked their claim. Pakistan has put forth motions to have the Koh-i-Noor returned to it, most recently in 2015, when a lawyer named Javed Iqbal Jaffry filed a petition in a Lahore court. The Taliban of Afghanistan asked for the diamond to be returned to them in 2000 so that it could be displayed in a museum in Kabul. The spokesperson for the Taliban claimed that since the Koh-i-Noor was stolen from them by India before it was then taken by the British, they have a claim to it before India. This request was unsurprisingly ignored by the British.

In 2016, India's Supreme Court ruled that the diamond was "neither stolen nor forcibly taken away". This seemed to settle the matter once and for all, but in 2023 rumours of a new campaign in India to secure the diamond's return surfaced. Whether the Koh-i-Noor is ever handed back remains to be seen, but what is beyond doubt is that the winding tale of this precious stone is far from over.


THE KOH-I-NOOR
Side view
THE KOH-I-NOOR
recut by Coster
102½ Carts
Front view.
THE KOH-I-NOOR
Back view
THE KOH-I-NOOR BEFORE RECUTTING
186 Carts
THE REGENT OR PITT DIAMOND 136 CTS
THE REGENT Side view.

Illustrations of the Koh-i-Noor before it was cut

© Getty Images

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RULE OF THE RAJ

British rule changed India forever – and its high-handed ways sowed the seeds for an unstoppable independence movement

Written by Edoardo Albert

The sepoy stood strapped to the cannon. His legs gave way beneath him, but the ropes tying him to the cannon's mouth held him up. The red-coated officer nodded to the artillery crew. "Execute sentence." The gun commander leaned forward and whispered to the bound sepoy. "I'd say, 'Remember Cawnpore', only you ain't gonna remember nothin' after this." Then he turned to the gunner. "Fire." The gunner brought the slow match to the touch hole. The primed fuse flared and, with a jerk, the cannon fired. The sepoy's head flew straight up, rising fifty or sixty feet into the air and then tumbling back down to earth where it lay, eyes glassy wide in death. The man's arms flew off in opposite directions. His legs, no longer held up, collapsed to the earth at the cannon's smoking mouth. And of his body there was simply nothing left. It had been pulverised.

It was 5 September 1857. Four months earlier, India had seemed secure under the rule of the East India Company. Then, starting in May, mutiny had broken out among the Company's Indian troops.

The rebellion began in Bengal, spreading through much of northern India. It largely bypassed the southern states, as well as the princely kingdoms that maintained fig leaves of independence under British overlordship. And the rebellion began because of grease.

The sepoys of the Bengal army already had a grievance at being sent to what was for them abroad in service of the Company. Fighting beyond the River Indus involved a loss of caste that caused hardship for the Bengal sepoys on their return, but the Company, expecting obedience from its soldiers, paid little attention to their grievances. Then the Company adopted a new rifle for its soldiers that required the cartridges to be greased before they were rammed down the rifle barrel. What was more, the rifleman had to bite the cartridge before ramming it home. Rumours began to spread that the grease was made from the fat of cows and pigs. To the Company's Hindu sepoys, for whom cattle were sacred, this was blasphemy. For the Muslims, to whom pork was anathema, it was polluting. The Company might as well have been smearing the bullets in excrement.

The Company withdrew the new cartridges, but the damage had been done. Suspicion now attached to everything the Company did, while the British began to distrust the sepoys. Then, on 9 May, as the land lay prostrate under the Sun waiting for the cooling monsoon rains, a particularly arrogant British officer, George Carmichael-Smyth, stationed in Meerut, court-martialled 85 sepoys for refusing to use the new cartridges, humiliating them in front of their regiment before sentencing them to ten years' hard labour.

The next day was a Sunday. Most of the British troops and officers in Meerut were off duty. The comrades of the condemned men broke into the gaol, freed them and then took the armoury before turning on the British soldiers and their families. Everything was tinder dry: a match was enough to set the bungalows of the British burning, and burn they did – although some sepoys escorted the better-liked officers and their families to safety before joining the rebellion.

Like the pre-monsoon wildfires, the rebellion spread. The rebels marched to nearby Delhi, where they called

> "To the Company's Hindu sepoys, for whom cattle were sacred, this was blasphemy"

upon the last descendant of the Mughal emperors, 82-year-old Bahadur Shah, to lead the rebellion. Bahadur Shah agreed to lend his name to the rebellion, but its leadership he left to the sepoys.

With the old Mughal Emperor now the nominal leader of the rebellion, many other units mutinied, particularly among the army of Bengal. However, the Sikhs, who provided the core of the Company army in the northwest of India, stayed loyal to the British as they had no wish to see the return of the Mughals, as did many other units of the Company's armies, such as the Gurkhas.

In Cawnpore, the British contingent was besieged by rebel troops led by Nana Saheb. After three weeks with no food and little water, the British agreed to surrender, having been offered safe passage by Nana Saheb. But as the survivors attempted to embark on river boats firing broke out and a general massacre ensued. The men were all killed, but the surviving women and children were taken hostage. The hostages, about 200 in all, were held at Bibighar.

By July, British forces were advancing on Cawnpore, defeating sepoy forces in battles along the way. Nana Saheb tried to use the hostages to negotiate a British withdrawal, but General Henry Havelock refused to talk. With reports of atrocities carried out by the advancing British reaching Nana Saheb, he and his advisors argued about what to do with their hostages. Who finally reached the decision remains unclear, but on 15 July the killing began. The women barricaded themselves into their room but sepoys fired through the boarded-up windows until disgust at what they were doing overcame them and they stopped. To finish off the rest, the door was broken down and local butchers sent in with cleavers. They hacked the women and children to death. The next morning, low-caste cleaners were engaged to throw the bodies down a dry well, but in moving the corpses they found three women and three children who had survived by hiding under the dead. The cleaners threw the women and children into the well too, still alive. They did not survive.

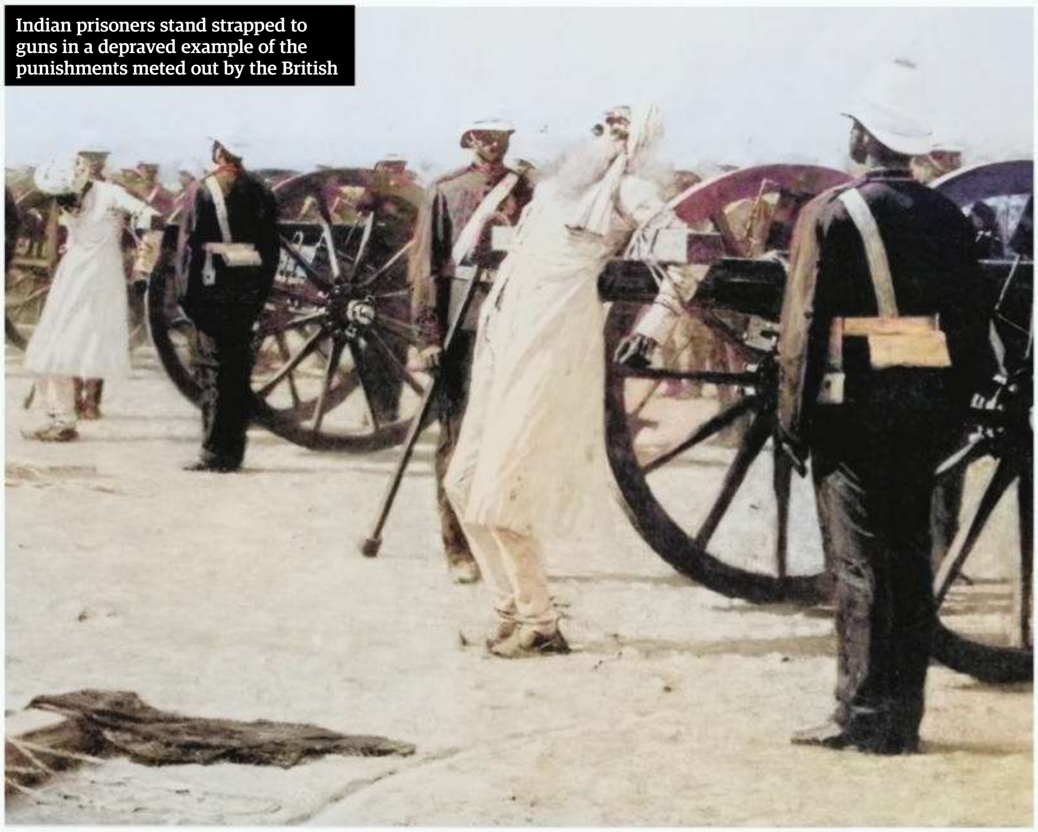
When the British forces reached Cawnpore and uncovered the evidence of the massacre, its horror triggered furious anger among the troops. "Remember Cawnpore!" became a rallying cry – and an excuse for further and greater horrors, this time perpetrated in supposed revenge.

The rebellion was crushed by November 1858. During those 18 months some 6,000 British were killed. But a vastly larger number of Indians were slaughtered, most of whom had played no direct part in the rebellion – something in the order of a hundred Indian lives for each British life.

The British called it a mutiny. Indians later called it a national uprising. It's perhaps best named the Great Rebellion. But whatever its name, it signalled a sea change in British policy in India.

The East India Company was dissolved and India came under direct British rule, with Queen Victoria installed as Empress of India. A viceroy ruled India on her behalf, with a council of appointed members to advise him. Each of India's 11 provinces had its own governor, with his own council of appointed officials, each council having a few Indians from the local elites appointed too.

Although British repression of the rebellion was savage, it is notable that they were cognisant of the tensions that had produced it. The original cartridge question was settled by allowing sepoys to use whatever grease they wanted. But, more importantly, the evangelical Christian activities of the previous quarter century were curtailed. Indeed, in 1858, Queen Victoria expressly proclaimed that she had no "desire to impose our


Indian prisoners stand strapped to guns in a depraved example of the punishments meted out by the British

STEEL AT HEART

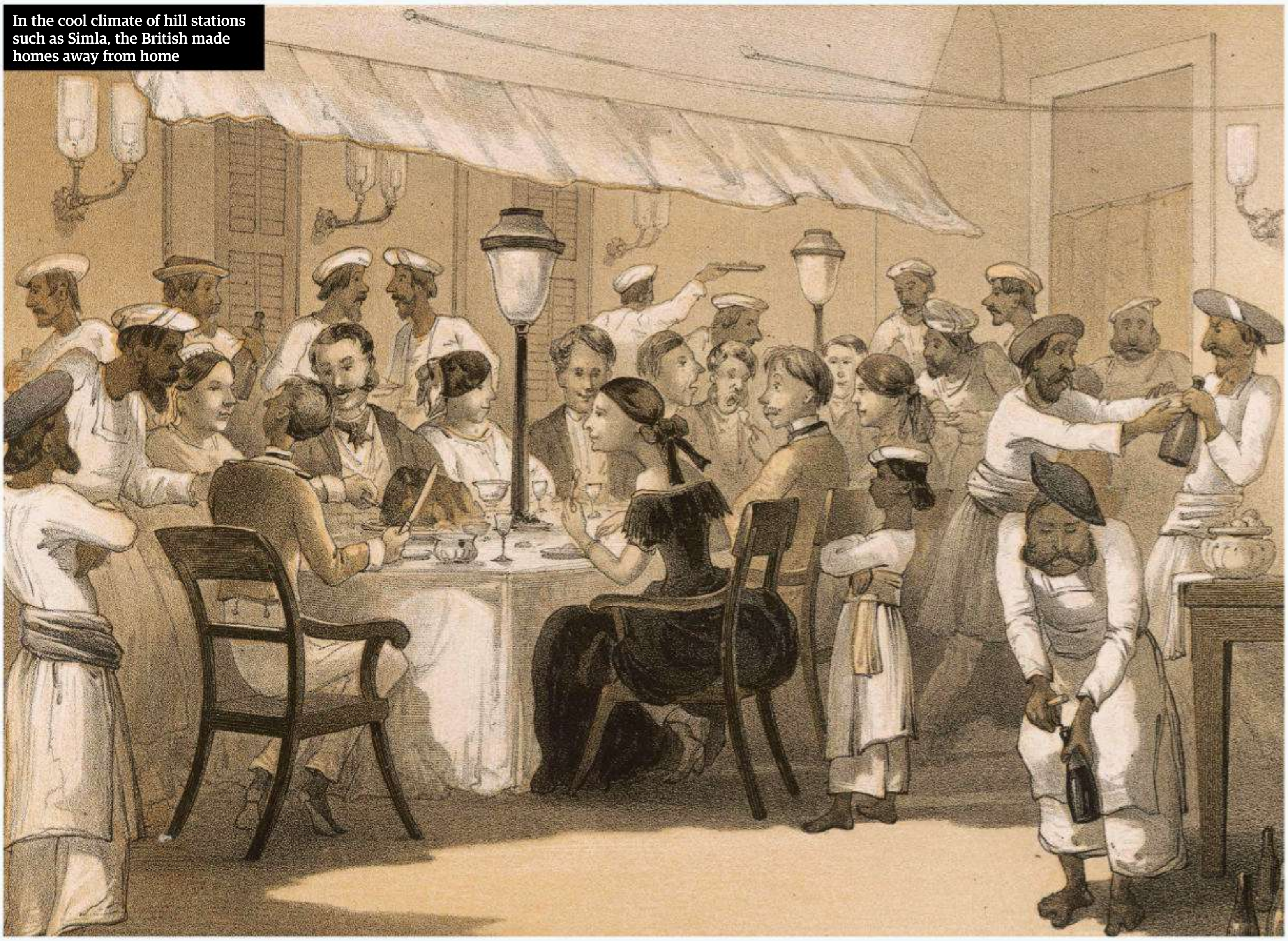
How an Indian philanthropist funded Congress and founded India's largest business conglomerate

In 1907, in response to the high-handedness of the imperial government, Indians launched a campaign of Swadeshi. Swadeshi means 'of one's own country', and it involved a boycott of imported British products, particularly textiles, which, being factory produced, undercut the textiles produced by Indian weavers. Indian mills thrived on the new business as Indians bought local produce. Among the Indians who profited from the swadeshi campaign was Jamshedji Tata. Tata was a Parsi, the religion founded by Zoroaster in Persia, and with the profits from his textile mills, Tata started funding the Indian National Congress. Following his death in 1904, his son, Dorabji, founded the Tata Iron and Steel Company in 1907, which is today one of the largest conglomerates in the world.

In a fascinating example of the reversal of business investment that has occurred in the 21st century, Tata, under the chairmanship of Ratan Tata, acquired Tetley, Jaguar Land Rover and Corus (the former British Steel).

In August 2024, Tata Group had a market capitalisation of $403 billion, making it one of the top twenty companies in the world. Not bad for something that started as a movement to divest from dependence on British imports and to support small Indian producers.

ALL INDIA PERMIT
GOODS CARRIER
TATA
The ubiquitous Tata Truck is a symbol of modern India



In the cool climate of hill stations such as Simla, the British made homes away from home

convictions on any of our subjects” while ordering British administrators not to interfere with people’s religions “on the pain of our highest displeasure”.

This was crucial to the establishment of the British Raj. The East India Company at the height of its strength had only a few tens of thousands of British troops in an India with a population in the millions. It had only been able to conquer India because it had persuaded many Indians to take its salt – pledge the Company their loyalty. One of the bases of that support was that the British did not care what religion you were so long as you served loyally. This was in distinction to Muslim ghazis, the religious warriors who had swept in from the northwest and created the Mughal Empire. Massacres of Hindu subjects and the demolition of Hindu shrines had been features of the Muslim conquest. The British, as the saying went, did not care who or what you worshipped so long as you could make a decent cup of tea.

In 1876, Queen Victoria was proclaimed empress of India. The imperial title was abolished in 1948.

However, this trust had been eroded in the early decades of the 19th century when a new generation of administrators arrived determined to ‘reform’ India. Some Hindu practices, such as suttee (widow-burning) and thuggee (religious robbery) were outlawed. Christian missionaries began to arrive and English wives also started to join their husbands, stopping dead the informal fraternisation practised by English men taking Indian concubines.

This led to the erection of greater barriers between the British and their Indian subjects, although a few scholars continued the work that had begun at the end of the 18th century. Company men such as Sir William Jones, James Prinsep and Warren Hastings wrote of the deep civilisation they found in India and began the systematic study of its history and culture. Indeed, even as profound a nationalist as Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his gratitude for their work.

For ‘India’, as such, did not exist. It has a huge number of languages (estimates range from 121 to 780), more than 2,000 ethnic groups, and every religion you’ve ever heard of and many that you haven’t. No empire had ever controlled all of India before the British, although the Mauryan Empire came close in 250 BCE; the history of the subcontinent was one of the steady rise and fall of empires that fragmented into smaller kingdoms before a new empire builder began his march. The idea of ‘India’ as a unified country did not really exist. But the Great Rebellion, the British reaction, and the division between British rulers and Indian subjects, in effect popularised the idea of ‘India’.

In 1885, a group of people came together to found the Indian National Congress. The man who had advertised the meeting, the effective founder of the political party that would guide India to independence and rule it for its first 40 years, was an Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume.

© Alamy

Mahatma Gandhi in the unexpected environs of a Lancashire textile mill surrounded by mill workers during a visit to Britain in 1931

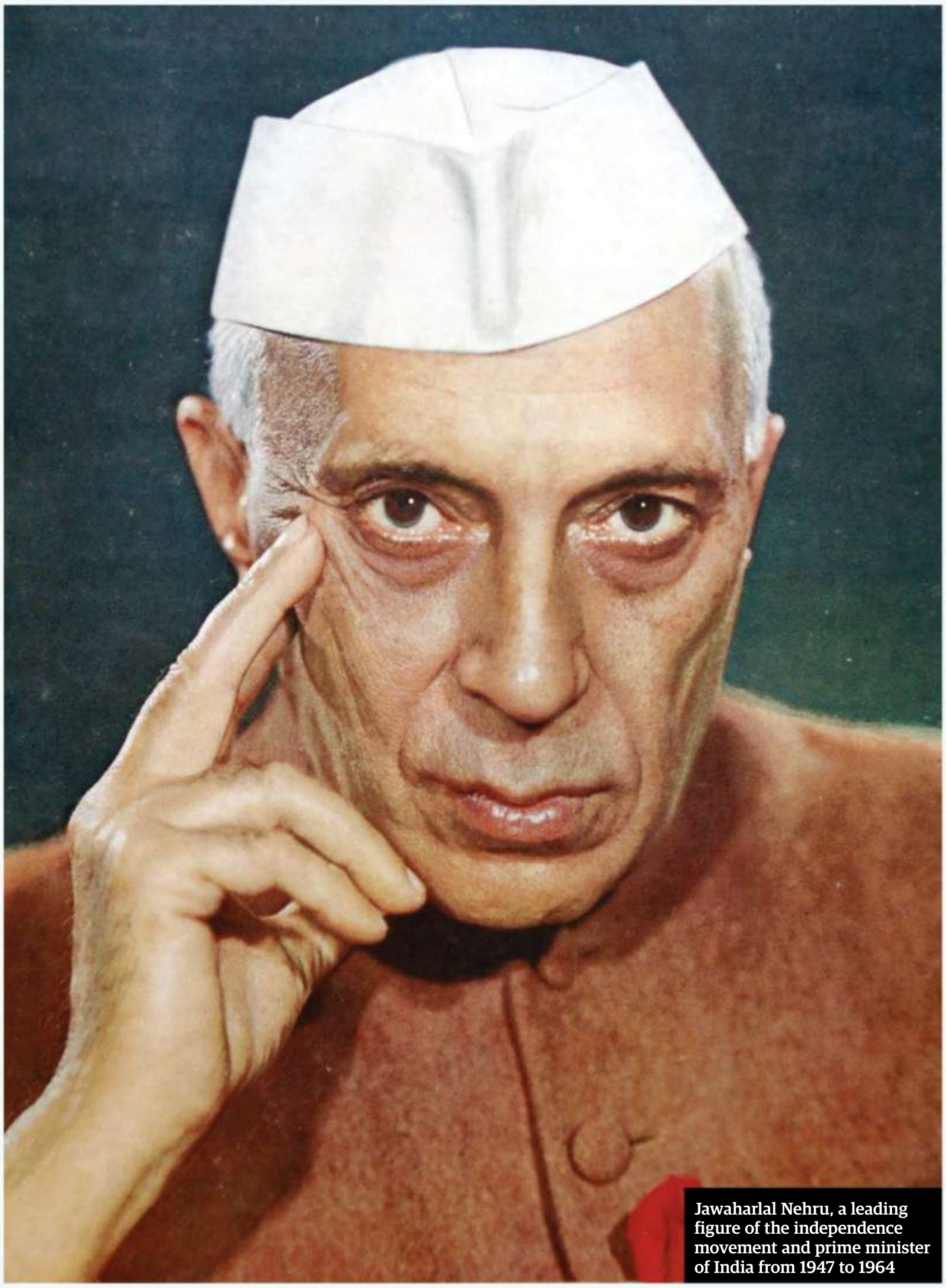
An administrator in the Indian civil service, Hume had come to the conclusion that British rule was characterised by "contempt for the feelings and opinions of our subjects".

Further British support for Indian home rule came from the Theosophists, an eclectic spiritual organisation led by Madame Helena Blavatsky that sought religious knowledge from India.

But while Britons might support Indian independence, it was up to Indians themselves to drive it through. As schools and universities were founded and thousands of miles of railway track were laid across the country, Indians began to aspire to a greater role in the running of the country. Indeed, the history of the Raj can be characterised by proposed British reforms running about ten years behind where Indians wanted to be. Then, the Great War began. Over 2 million Indians served abroad in the armies of the British Empire. At its end, returning Indians, who included in their number one Mohandas Gandhi, expected the recompense for their service to be far greater autonomy. But the reforms proposed by the governor-general were, again, at least ten years behind Indian expectations.

In response, Gandhi declared the first national satyagraha, non-violent resistance to British rule. In Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikhs, the result was a tragedy that irrevocably ended Britain's moral claim to rule India. Following some disturbances that had led to five deaths, the lieutenant-governor prohibited all meetings. However, on 13 April 1919, a large crowd gathered – it was a Sunday and a feast day, and many out-of-towners had arrived not knowing there were any problems. Seeing the crowd gathered in a large communal meeting space, surrounded by walls, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer blocked the five exits with his troops and then, without warning or any attempt to disperse the crowd, ordered his men to fire.

The British Raj effectively ended that day, washed away by the blood of the victims of the Amritsar massacre (also known as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre) and the arrogance of Brigadier-General Dyer, who remained utterly unrepentant. It



Jawaharlal Nehru, a leading figure of the independence movement and prime minister of India from 1947 to 1964

Politically, Rudyard Kipling was a committed imperialist but his tales of India, in particular *Kim*, remain the best portrayals of India under the Raj

was now just a question of how long it would take for it to die.

The answer was 28 years, with India becoming an independent state on 15 August 1947. The three key figures in the independence movement were Mahatma Gandhi, its spiritual leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, the political leader, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of Pakistan. The Congress Party, which Nehru led, wanted a united, secular (in the sense of no religion having special legal status) India comprising all the lands administered by the British. But Jinnah, as leader of the All-India Muslim League, wanted separate homelands for India's Muslim minority. Jinnah's demands would ultimately be met.

However, before India could realise its dream of independence it would be dragged into the fires of the Second World War by its British rulers, who were desperate to utilise its manpower and resources in a bid to defeat Nazi Germany and its allies. Being forced into the conflict without consultation understandably enraged many Indians, but, as we shall see, it also provided a vital spark in the struggle to shake off the yolk of British rule forever. By the war's end over 3 million Indian civilians and 87,000 Indian soldiers lay dead, a truly horrendous toll, but one that the leaders of the independence movement were determined would not be in vain. Britain's grip on India was finally about to be prised open.

Unlike Nehru, Muhammad Ali Jinnah did not long survive the creation of Pakistan, dying on 11 September 1948

© Alamy

Mule handlers of the Royal Indian Army Corps parade with drawn swords, 16 November 1940

INDIA AT WAR

Two world conflicts changed the subcontinent and its people forever, with millions fighting across the globe returning to a nation on the cusp of wresting control of its fate

Written by Tim Williamson

Between 1914 and 1945 India was swept up, along with much of the rest of the globe, in the First and Second World Wars. Millions of Indians fought around the world during these conflicts, with thousands killed. It was a period that saw unparalleled destruction but also rapid change as the country accelerated along its path to independence from Britain. Prior to the First World War, the Indian Army was a relatively small force of around 159,000 - a fraction of the 1.4 million it would reach by 1918. Charged mainly with guarding the Raj's northwest frontier, as well as keeping civil order, its soldiers were recruited from what the British considered the 'martial races'. This colonial theory identified certain groups within Indian society for their perceived fighting capability - including Sikhs, Muslims, Gurkhas, Rajputs and others. Crucially for the Raj authorities, these groups were also perceived as being the most loyal to an empire still labouring under an imperial paranoia rooted in the 1857 India rebellion. However, the officers leading these soldiers were strictly white British, selected largely from the middle- and upper-classes of the affluent home counties rather than Punjab villages. Assisting them were Indian NCOs or VCOs (viceroy-commissioned officers), who acted as a link between the British officers and the men under their command. The experiences of the First World War would see only some of these colonial tropes erased.

Only weeks after the outbreak of the war it became clear that the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France would need reinforcements. Despite the army's resolute performance at Mons, and the successful 'Miracle on the Marne' counterattack, by late September 1914 the British army was understrength and strung out over a vast frontline. The empire desperately needed more men. While volunteers flocked to sign up in the British Isles, Indian soldiers were already arriving in Marseilles to fill the ranks. The first divisions of the Indian Expeditionary Force A (IEFA) - the 7th Lahore and 3rd Meerut - arrived on the Western Front just in time to shore up the frontline at the First Battle of Ypres (19 October - 30 November).

Sikh soldiers manning an artillery piece in Malaya, 1941, before the Japanese conquest

Though brand-new Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifles were flung into their hands upon arrival, the sepoys (Indian privates) were lacking much of the other weaponry and equipment that was increasingly essential on the Western Front; barbed wire, artillery and machine guns were all in short supply at first. Nonetheless, the Indian divisions held the line, and there are several accounts of individual heroism, sacrifice and lethality. One officer, Havildar Ganga Singh (havildar is equivalent to a sergeant), reportedly killed five

Germans while defending his position, breaking his bayonet in the process. With more enemy approaching, Singh grabbed a fallen German officer's sword and continued the fight. He was later found with multiple wounds but alive. It was also in the wintery Flanders mud that the Indian Corps' first Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for valour, was earned by Khudadad Khan of the 129th Baluchis Brigade. With his machine-gun position under heavy assault, Khan and his comrades kept up the defensive fire, even as their position was overrun by the Germans. The only survivor of his unit, Khan was decorated with the VC by King George in January 1915.

Despite their hasty deployment – in some cases not receiving proper clothing to keep out the European winter – by 1915 the IEFA made up a third of all troops under British command on the Western Front. However, gradually the corps was all but entirely withdrawn from France. The brutal experience of all troops on the frontline had struck a hammering toll on the corps, and in particular many of its officers were lost in the early months of combat. Two cavalry divisions remained, taking part in several major offensives as well as carrying out reconnaissance roles. At the Battle of Cambrai (1917), the Indian cavalrymen even found themselves fighting alongside tanks. They would later be transferred to Egypt and took part in the final offensives against German and Ottoman armies in Palestine.

Other Indian Expeditionary Forces – labelled alphabetically – served across Africa, the Middle

Indian troops pictured with a machine gun in France during the First World War

KHYBER PASS
TO
HELL-FIRE PASS

Troops of the Indian 4th Division daub their vehicle in North Africa, June 1941

Bengal lancers pictured in London during the First World War

East and elsewhere. Forces B and C were deployed to East Africa, while forces D, E and F were sent to Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Of particular strategic importance was the Suez Canal - the vital waterway connecting the Mediterranean and Red Sea, ultimately linking the Indian subcontinent and Europe. The proximity to India not only shortened the supply lines for the army but also meant quicker communication between soldiers on the frontline and their families at home and eased the transporting of the sick and injured.

In 1915, Indian Expeditionary Force G (IEFG) took part in one of the most infamous and controversial campaigns of the conflict: Gallipoli. Thousands of French, British, Australian and New Zealand soldiers were deployed during this offensive to seize the Dardanelles strait - the narrow channel giving access to the Ottoman heartlands. From April they were joined by the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, and for the remainder of the year more units withdrawn from France were deployed, totalling approximately 16,000 men. In fact, it was men of the 6th Gurkha Rifles who captured the ridge of Sari Bair, briefly holding the high ground that had been fought over for so long. It's estimated that one in ten of the IEFG died in the Dardanelles campaign and thousands were wounded.

By the end of the war over 74,000 Indian Army soldiers had been killed. Though the British had promised Indian politicians increased freedoms and autonomy within the empire in repayment for the country's contribution to the war effort, in the aftermath the Raj government only doubled down on its control. In response to growing Indian nationalism protests were banned and a law was passed enabling arrest without trial. The tensions culminated in the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre of April 1919, where approximately 2,000 unarmed civilians were killed and injured when British soldiers fired into a gathered crowd.

The massacre only served to fuel the nationalist movement and anti-British sentiment throughout India. By the arrival of the next great conflict this movement was poised to fight for the chance to create an independent nation.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

On 3 September 1939, Viceroy Lord Linlithgow declared war on Germany - a formality after the British declaration on the same date. Along with the rest of the empire, India was put onto a wartime footing once again, its factories transformed to produce military materiel, with sandbags and air raid sirens set up around public buildings. Martial law was declared across the country, with all German and Austrian nationals residing in India arrested and interned.

For the nation's burgeoning political parties, the viceroy's unilateral declaration of war on behalf of millions of Indians evoked outrage, but

THE BENGAL FAMINE

Nineteen forty-three saw one of the worst famines in Indian history, with the deaths of over 3 million civilians. The crisis struck at a critical time in the war, with Burma recently falling to Japanese occupation and Indian territory under threat of invasion. Rice supplies were cut off from the east, and a severe typhoon in the winter of 1942-43, as well as crop disease, had also severely damaged food supplies. The Raj government's scorched-earth 'denial' policy also resulted in local fishing boats and surplus rice being confiscated in order to keep them out of enemy hands.

Those worst affected were agricultural communities, who were among the poorest in the country and unable to afford the steep rise in food prices. From the summer, thousands travelled into Calcutta (today, Kolkata) and other urban centres in search of food relief. By October, around 100,000 filled the city's streets, which became lined with emaciated corpses. While thousands starved, many also succumbed to disease.

As the severity of the crisis became clearer, the newly installed viceroy of India, Field Marshal Archibald Wavell, urgently appealed to London for help. It never came. "The vital problems of India are being treated by His Majesty's Government with neglect, even sometimes with hostility and contempt," he wrote to Churchill in October 1944 at the peak of the deaths.

Historians continue to debate the causes of the famine, with many blaming Churchill for refusing to reroute emergency aid to India, in doing so allowing more deaths. Others point to failures in the Raj and provincial governments, which were unable to identify the looming crisis in food stocks and were slow to respond. By the winter of 1944 the food supplies were restored, but the devastating impact of the famine remained for generations.

A starving child on the streets of Calcutta during the 1943 famine

© Getty Images

it also presented an opportunity. Since 1918, calls for increased autonomy, political freedom and independence had steadily grown. The Indian National Congress (INC), the country's largest political party, initially offered to support the war in exchange for greater autonomy but strongly objected to not being consulted on Linlithgow's declaration of war. In protest its elected officials staged a mass resignation in November 1939. The INC's main rival, the Muslim League, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, chose to support Britain's war effort, seeking a stronger post-war settlement for Muslim-majority provinces. These dividing lines and political trade-offs would broadly endure for the remainder of the war and into partition.

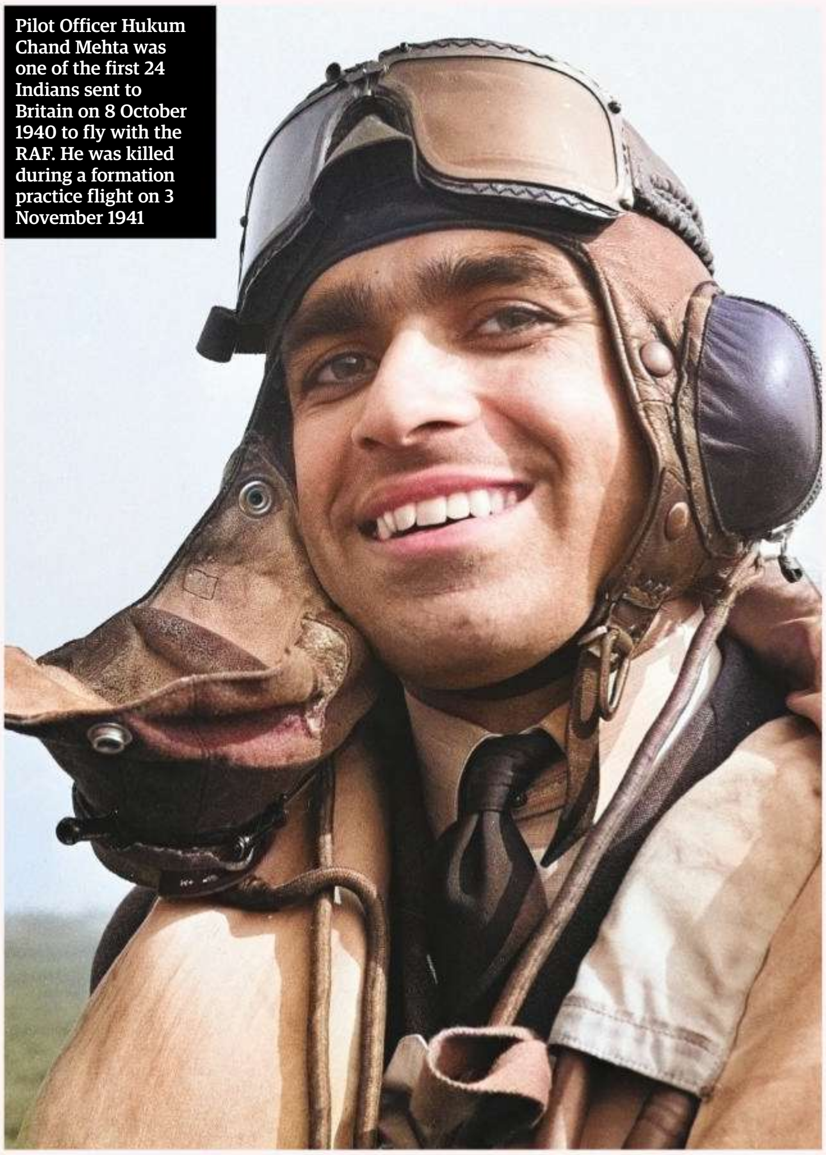
While the political battle for India's future raged on, thousands of Indians marched to the frontline. As in the First World War, no conscription was introduced in the country. Instead, fighting age men were encouraged - and at times pressured or cajoled - into the recruitment offices. The old reliance on the supposed 'martial races' still endured, with certain regions targeted by recruitment parties. Over 50,000 enlisted by the spring of 1940, and by the end of that year up to 20,000 per month were joining. One noted change from the previous war was the presence of Indian commissioned officers in the Indian Army - graduates from the Royal Military College Sandhurst. By 1945, India's armed forces would peak at 2.5 million personnel.

Once again the Indian Army found itself stationed at the Empire's strategic centres of power in the Middle East and Africa. When in September 1940 Italian tanks came rolling across the Libyan-Egyptian border, the 4th Indian Infantry Division (the Red Eagles) was on the frontline of the defences. The division played a huge role in the subsequent counterattack - Operation Compass - that threw the Italians back some 805 kilometres (500 miles), capturing over 130,000 POWs.

The victory in North Africa was a brief triumph in what would prove to be a string of humiliating defeats for Britain and its empire. While the arrival of Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps reversed the Allied advances in the Western Desert, a new threat in the East emerged when Japan declared war. Within weeks, Hong Kong had been conquered, with two Indian battalions killed or captured by Christmas 1941. The Japanese advance continued, with the fall of the British stronghold of Singapore on 15 February 1942. Around 45,000 Indian soldiers, over half the garrison, were taken prisoner. Not only a major turning point in the war, the fall of Singapore would give rise to a new force for Indian independence. The Indian POWs were given an offer by their captors to continue the fight - against the British.

Historian Joyce Lebra provides a dramatic account of the speech given by Japanese officer Major Iwaichi Fujiwara to the gathered crowd: "Beloved Indian soldiers! On behalf of the Japanese Army I accept the surrender of Indian soldiers from British Army authorities!" Fujiwara declared through translators. "We hope you will join the Indian National Army (INA). The Japanese Army will not treat you as prisoners but as friends. We will recognize your struggle for freedom and give you all-out assistance."

Of the Indian POWs, around 20,000 were recruited into the INA, under Japanese command, headed by nationalist Indian leader Subhas


Pilot Officer Hukum Chand Mehta was one of the first 24 Indians sent to Britain on 8 October 1940 to fly with the RAF. He was killed during a formation practice flight on 3 November 1941

An Indian munitions worked pictured during the Second World War

29th Indian brigade soldiers in the trenches at Gallipoli, 1916

British and Indian troops of the 14th Army link up on the vital connecting road between Kohima and Imphal, July 1944

Chandra Bose. With this national army, Bose aspired to liberate India from the British by force. Later that same year Gandhi's non-violent Quit India Movement was formed, meaning there were now two polar opposite approaches to achieving independence, both emerging amid the lowest ebb of British power in the region.

The fall of Singapore was followed by a long, bloody retreat of the remaining Allied forces out of Burma (now Myanmar) and into India. From the summer of 1942, the Allies were limited to launching long-range raids from northeast India into occupied Burma, using a small, highly trained unit to infiltrate, gather intelligence and sabotage enemy logistics and infrastructure. The 77th Indian Infantry Brigade was the first such unit assigned to what became known as the Chindits. In February 1943, a major incursion into Burma by 3,000 Chindits alerted Japanese commanders to the threat of a counterattack.

In 1944, Japan launched an offensive into India with the aim of cutting off two key strategic bases at Kohima and Imphal, which served as the Chindits' launchpad. The Japanese also hoped to incite India's independence movement into action. "If the Japanese Army succeeds in the Imphal invasion and pushes the INA forward in the Assam plain, the Indian people, as well as officers and men in the British-Indian Army, will respond to the INA," Subhas Chandra Bose declared ahead of the offensive. "This will spread all over India, especially in my home state of Bengal."

By the end of March 1944 the Japanese had cut off the road between Kohima and Imphal, isolating the garrisons in each, which were both soon under siege. Three Indian divisions at Imphal defended against relentless enemy attacks for two and a half months, while a small garrison at Kohima was engaged in deadly close-quarter fighting with up to 15,000 enemy soldiers. Constant RAF resupply drops kept the garrisons fighting, while the overstretched Japanese suffered heavy casualties. By June, reinforcements arriving from the west were able to relieve the besieged troops, and the Japanese were forced to withdraw. The victory at Kohima and Imphal enabled the Indian-British 14th Army, commanded by General William "Bill" Slim, to go on the offensive in Burma and Malaya, capturing Rangoon (Yangon, Myanmar) in May 1945. The Japanese defeat also marked the end of the INA's ambition to drive the British out of India at gunpoint. However, the nationalist army did have one more role to play.

After the war, over 10,000 captured INA soldiers were returned to India from Rangoon, joining thousands more POWs taken during the final months of the conflict. For millions of Indians, these men were returning heroes and patriots. For the British, they were traitors, and in November 1945 authorities court-martialled several senior INA officers in Delhi. Newspaper coverage of the trial fuelled the already widespread support for independence and the end of British rule. Protests and demonstrations in support of the INA officers flared up in Delhi, Calcutta, Lahore and elsewhere. Some turned violent, with hundreds killed and injured by police. By April 1946, the accused officers were found guilty, sentenced but released – a recognition that the court's authority, like the British Raj, was over.

> "For millions of Indians, these men were returning heroes and patriots. For the British, they were traitors"

A LITERARY PASSAGE THROUGH INDIA

Countless classic books have been written about this fascinating place. Here are six of the greatest tomes on India…

Written by Bee Ginger

India. The name itself conjures up images of intense colour, vibrant culture and Bollywood glamour, all enriched with the scent of enticing spices and exotic flowers permeating the air. The cities hum with life, their diverse communities each adding to a rich tapestry. It's therefore no surprise to learn that India has inspired countless storytellers across millennia, with some of the country's oldest works dating back to 1500 BCE.

In more recent times, a wealth of authors have contributed stunning books to a flourishing literary scene, many of whom have won prestigious awards and global recognition for their work, including Geetanjali Shree, who was crowned the winner of the International Booker Prize in 2022 for *Tomb of Sand*, the first title written in Hindi to receive this award.

The following six books have been selected for their passion and insight into this incredible country, each one exploring the beauty and complexity of a multilayered land home to truly unique peoples and the challenges and triumphs of life in India.

"It's no surprise to learn that India has inspired countless storytellers"

Future / Generated by Adobe Firefly AI

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

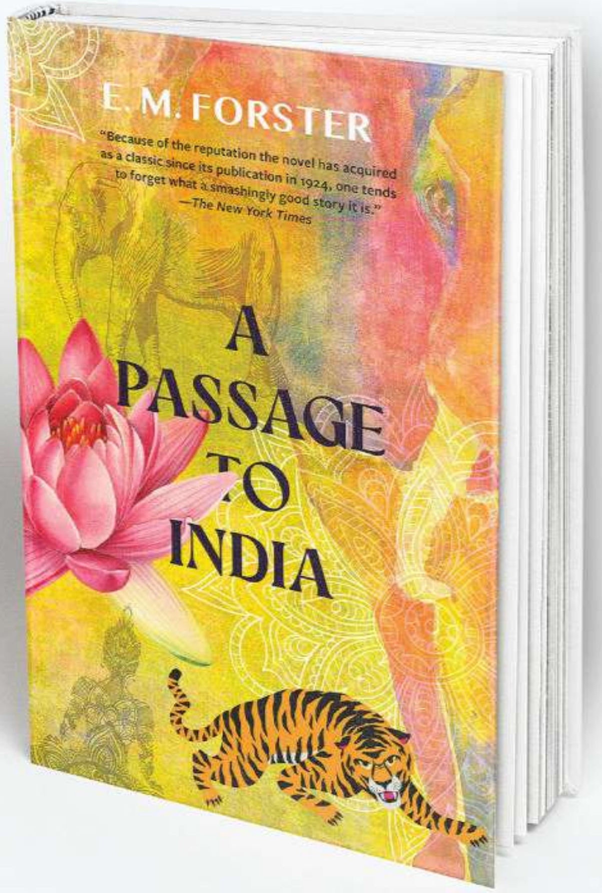
E. M. FORSTER

Set in the fictional city of Chandrapore (a location inspired by the city of Bankipur, built on the banks of the Ganges in 1771), *A Passage to India*, which was published in 1924, examines colonialism at a time when India was still under the rule of the British.

Centred around a visiting Englishwoman by the name of Adela Quested accusing an Indian doctor of sexually assaulting her during a visit to the Marabar Caves, Forster's novel explores the complex relationships between the Indian people and the British colonists, exposing the many deep-seated cultural tensions that arose and shining a harsh light on the repercussions of colonial rule and the power dynamics it can create.

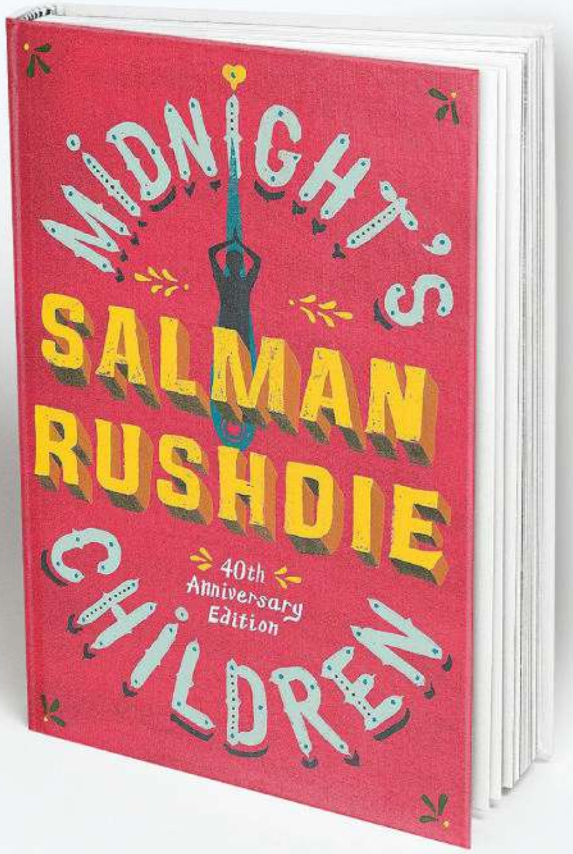
These simmering tensions ultimately boil over during and after the trial of Dr. Aziz (the man Quested claims assaulted her), who struggles to maintain his friendship with the principal of a college in Chandrapore as sides are taken.

Considered to be Forster's finest work, *A Passage to India* is not without its controversial elements, but these in no way detract from the vital questions that this classic book poses, chief among them whether an Indian and an Englishman can truly be friends in an age when one was treated with deference and the other thinly veiled suspicion.


E. M. FORSTER
"Because of the reputation the novel has acquired as a classic since its publication in 1924, one tends to forget what a smashingly good story it is."
—The New York Times
A PASSAGE TO INDIA

© Warbler Classics

> "Life never gives us what we want at the moment that we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually"
>
> E M Forster, *A Passage to India*



MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

SALMAN RUSHDIE

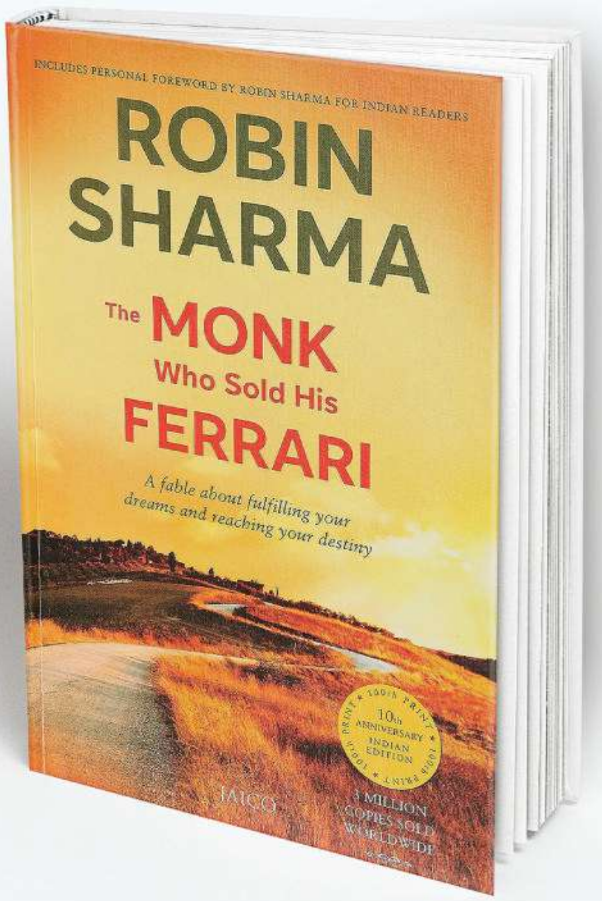
Published in 1981 and divided into three books, *Midnight's Children* tells the story of Saleem Sinai, who is born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence from Britain. Gifted with remarkable telepathic powers that link him to other children born at the same time, Sinai's life is closely tied to the tumultuous events unfolding in a newly sovereign India. As he seeks to understand the magical abilities bestowed upon him and others, Sinai's family endure a number of testing journeys through a continent ravaged by conflict, and Sinai is later embroiled in the suffocating climate of the Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi in 1975.

Rushdie cleverly weaves together themes of magical realism, memory and storytelling alongside both historical context and cultural identity. The novel's theme focuses on a portrayal of a newly independent Indian society, especially the pains caused by this transition, a loose allegory depicting the events following the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan.

The author's language is playful throughout, with incorrect grammar, purposely misspelt words and the occasional addition of Urdu and Hindi to create new words. It is immensely funny, with wit and numerous humorous asides and jokes. This entrancing tale is a must for anyone seeking to better understand this fascinating period.

© Vintage Publishing

> "India, the new myth – a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies: money and God"
>
> Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*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THE MONK WHO SOLD HIS FERRARI

ROBIN SHARMA

Widely regarded as one of the most empowering books of all time, Sharma's internationally bestselling fable encapsulates not only a spiritual journey based on his own search for his life's true purpose, but a story filled with powerful lessons encouraging the reader to turn their back on the trappings of consumerism.

The author provides a guided approach to pursuing a more balanced existence through his main character, Julian Mantle – a lawyer who, following a serious heart attack, has to take stock and address his life – and his best friend, John. Mantle's journey (which he narrates to John) sees him selling all of his possessions (including the Ferrari, a symbol of ego, external validation and materialism) and embarking on a journey to trek through India. Throughout his travels he encounters Himalayan gurus who offer him wise counsel on taking one day at a time and nourishing both the mind and relationships with others.

Based on Sharma's personal experiences after he left the legal industry at the age of 25, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* is a positive and uplifting read that reinforces the importance of trusting in the universe and valuing what truly matters in life.

© Jaico

> "Everything is created twice, first in the mind and then in reality"
>
> Robin Sharma, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*

A FINE BALANCE

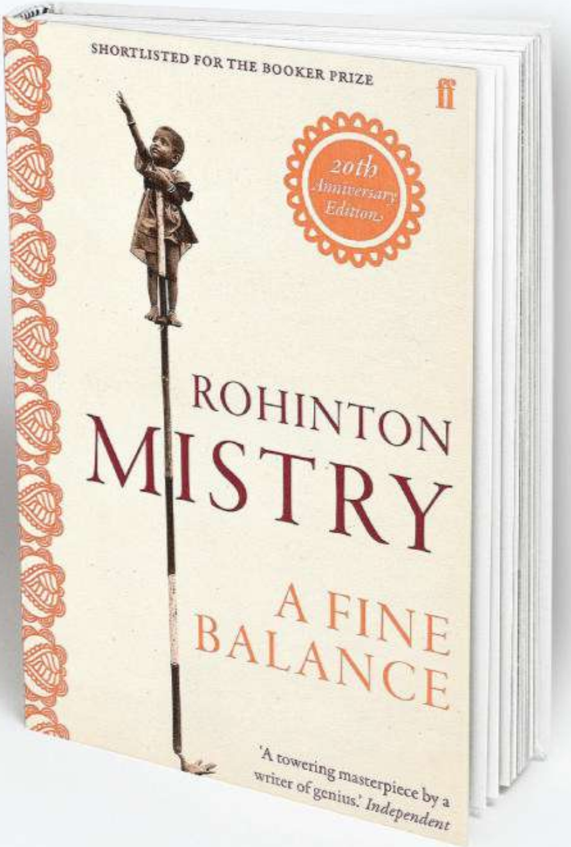
ROHINTON MISTRY

It is 1975, and Indira Gandhi has declared a State of Emergency in India, thus causing the lives of four complete strangers to collide and intertwine forever. In an unnamed city by the sea, the four are thrust together to share a cramped apartment, their lives uprooted and their futures uncertain. Their journeys take them from guarded distrust to friendship and eventually love in a nation wracked by violence and corruption.

At times a tale of misery and suffering, Mistry's tale is also punctuated by humour, compassion and selflessness. However, when it comes to the draconian measures imposed by Gandhi, Mistry does not hold back, his prose often critical of someone who is only ever referred to as "the Prime Minister" in this ultimately harrowing examination of a period of upheaval that saw thousands of Gandhi's opponents imprisoned.

Shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1996, *A Fine Balance* scooped the Giller Prize in Canada, where Mistry lives, and was hailed by *The Telegraph* as one of the greatest Asian novels ever written. It was adapted for the stage in 2006 to wide acclaim.

> "If there was an abundance of misery in the world, there was also sufficient joy, yes – as long as one knew where to look for it"
>
> Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance*


SHORTLISTED FOR THE BOOKER PRIZE
ff
20th Anniversary Edition
ROHINTON MISTRY
A FINE BALANCE
'A towering masterpiece by a writer of genius.' Independent

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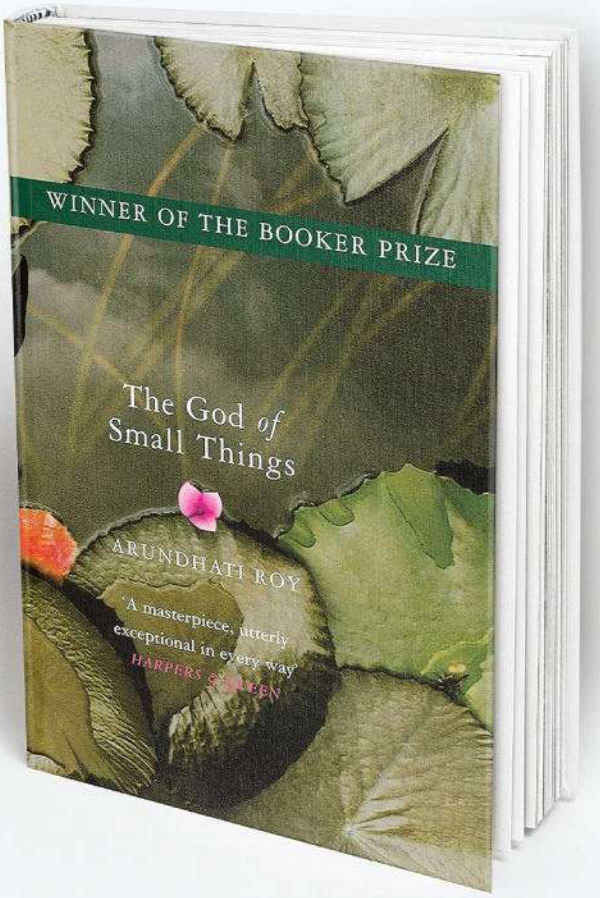


THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

ARUNDHATI ROY

Published in 1997, *The God of Small Things* was Roy's first novel, and to say it made a splash in the literary world would be something of an understatement. A bestseller in 21 countries and winner of the 1997 Booker Prize, it catapulted Roy – the first Indian woman to win the Booker – to global fame.

Set in 1960s Kerala, Roy's novel chronicles the experiences of two seven-year-old fraternal twins, Estha and Rahel, whose childhoods are impacted by the 'love laws' prevalent in India at the time. Their childhood is mixed with banana jam, political turbulence and mountains of peppercorns and is ultimately irrevocably shaken following the arrival of a young cousin from abroad. Intentional and accidental tragedies and an illicit liaison ensue, the story telling how "They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much."

Roy vividly explores issues surrounding religion, race, class and politics through the family's downfall, skilfully describing how seemingly insignificant occurrences can shape a person's destiny. However, despite a wealth of positive reviews, *The God of Small Things* was not universally adored, with Roy forced to answer obscenity charges due to the descriptions of sexuality featured in the book.

© HarperCollins Publishers

"And there it was again. Another religion turned against itself. Another edifice constructed by the human mind, decimated by human nature"

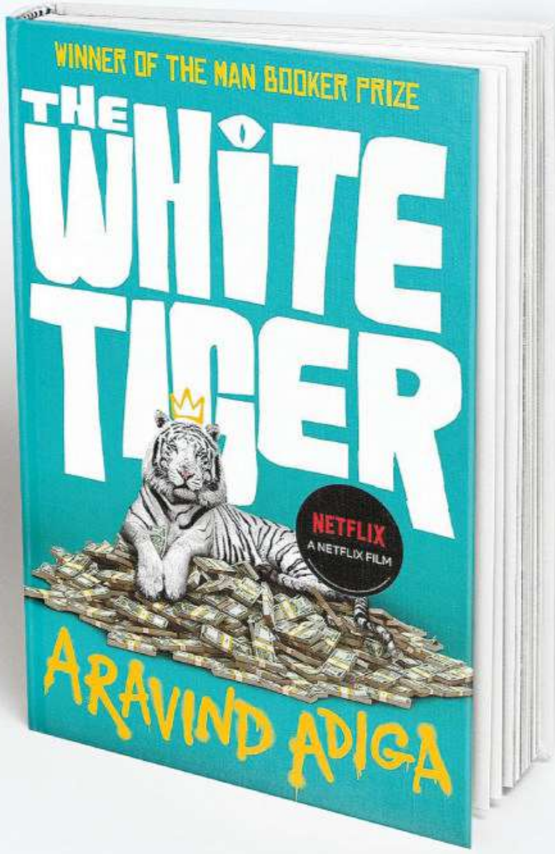
Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

THE WHITE TIGER

ARAVIND ADIGA

Told in the form of a lengthy letter written by the son of a rickshaw puller named Balram Halwai that is addressed to a prominent Chinese politician, *The White Tiger* shrewdly investigates corruption, loyalty, caste and poverty in India as well as issues surrounding the Hindu religion. Darkly humorous and unrelentingly engaging, Halwai explains how he transformed from a local waiter to a larcenous killer and entrepreneur. Witnessing the corruption and socioeconomic discrimination that generates division in his homeland, he forms a new identity based on his ideas of morality, which are presented as flexible or rigid depending on the circumstances. Determined to exploit India's murky underworld for his own ends, Halwai repeatedly proves that he is willing to stop at nothing (including offending his own grandmother) to achieve his selfish ends. But shedding an old identity and betraying others in the quest for wealth will come at great personal cost, leaving Halwai with little but the sense that life is in fact a trap.

The White Tiger bagged Adiga – who was only 33 at the time – the 2008 Booker Prize, and it has since been adapted for a Netflix film that was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay at the Oscars in 2021.



© Atlantic Books

"The moment you recognise what is beautiful in this world, you stop being a slave"

Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*

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The ancient island nation of Japan has a history that goes back thousands of years and includes some of the most dramatic and chilling events the world stage has ever seen. Find out more...

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GANDHI'S PEACEFUL FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Standing off against armed soldiers and the might of the British Empire, Mahatma Gandhi led a nation to independence without raising a fist in anger

Written by Frances White

The Sun streams down on a balmy spring day as thousands of Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus gather in the garden of the Golden Temple on the festival of Baisakhi. In the blink of an eye the peaceful gathering is plunged into chaos. General Dyer, a British Indian Army officer, has entered with 90 soldiers clutching rifles. With one word they aim their guns at the unarmed civilians and fire. Madness and panic tears through the crowded garden as the defenceless citizens run for their lives.

Some of the families fight their way to the narrow gates only to find them locked. Desperate men and women looking for safety fling themselves into the dark depths of a single well, but the drop is treacherous and later 120 lifeless bodies are removed. After ten minutes of continuous shooting, a dull silence descends. The wounded are left lying where they fall as people watch helplessly from afar, terrified of suffering a similar fate. This attack was aimed to not disperse but to punish. The British put the death toll at 379, but Indian officials estimated the true figure was in excess of 1,500.

The Amritsar massacre of 1919 would become a cornerstone in the Indian fight for independence. After violent protests by the Indian Independence Movement the British Government was uneasy and, fearing a conspiracy to overthrow them, invoked martial law, making it illegal for more than four people to assemble. Upon facing the crowd of unarmed men, women and children, Dyer reported that he was "confronted by a revolutionary army". The massacre was horrendous, but it did achieve something years of negotiations could not: it united three groups - Hindu extremists, pan-Islamists and Sikh revolutionaries - toward a single goal: freedom. The inflamed people still lacked something fundamental, though - a leader.

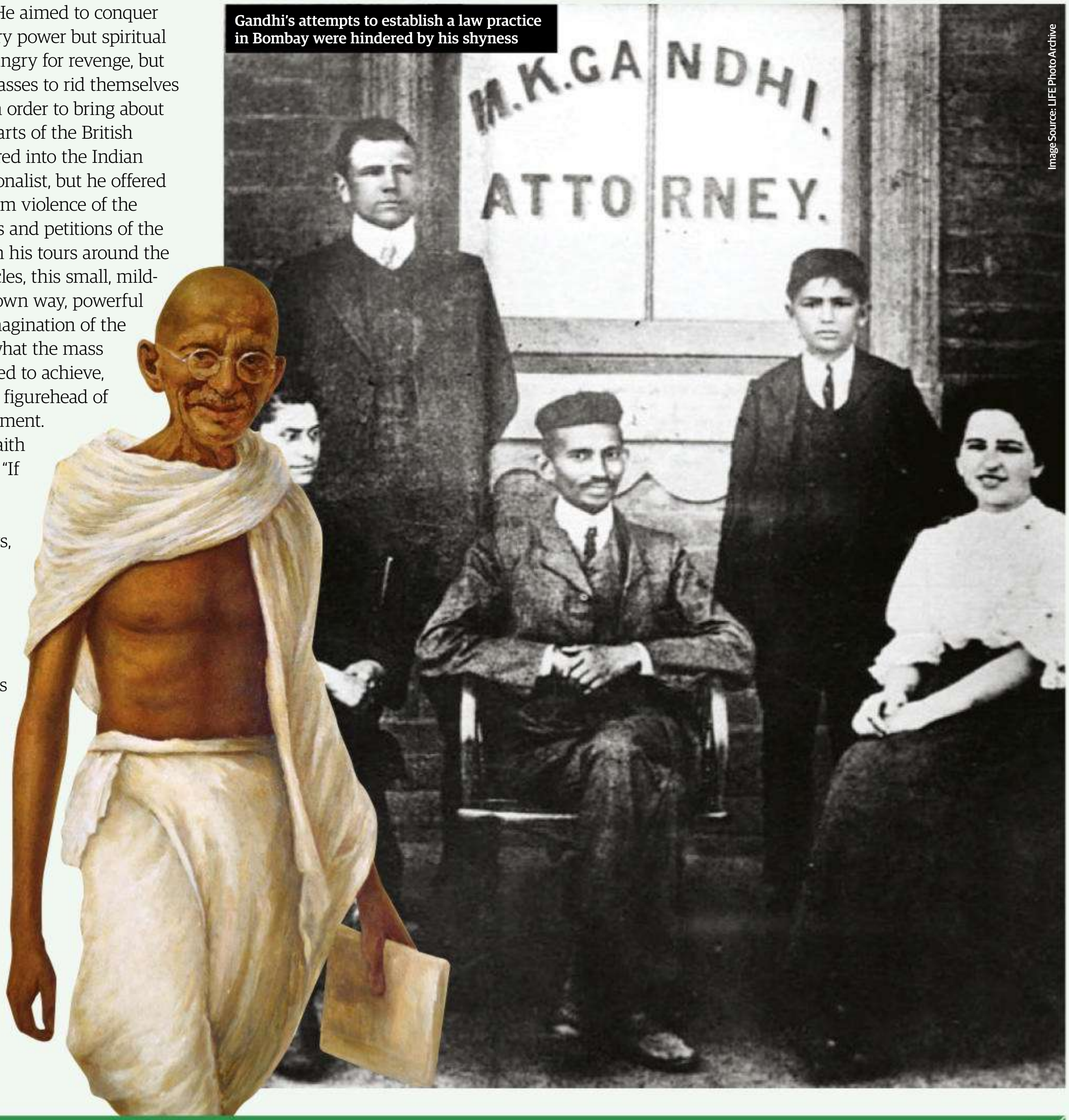
Mohandas Gandhi, who had previously encouraged Indian troops to join the British fight in the First World War, felt his trust and faith crushed in an instant. He compared the British Government to "the fabled snake with a brilliant jewel on its head, but which has fangs full of poison" and felt a great force within him to rid the world of this venom. He concluded that independence for India was the only option, and with that decision he became the vessel for freedom for an impoverished and starving nation.

Dedicated to pacifism, Gandhi waged his fight not on the battlefield but in the spirits

© Getty Images. Generated by Adobe Firefly AI

and minds of the people. He aimed to conquer the British not with military power but spiritual force. The Indians were hungry for revenge, but Gandhi encouraged the masses to rid themselves of violence and disunity in order to bring about a similar change in the hearts of the British Government. Gandhi entered into the Indian Congress in 1920 as a nationalist, but he offered an alternative to the random violence of the masses and the resolutions and petitions of the law-abiding Congress. With his tours around the country and eloquent articles, this small, mild-mannered and yet, in his own way, powerful man had entranced the imagination of the people. This was exactly what the mass movement Congress wanted to achieve, and Gandhi was made the figurehead of the non-cooperation movement.

Building on his strong faith and morality, Gandhi said, "If we trust and fear God we shall have to fear no one, not Maharajas, not Viceroys, not the detectives or even King George." As rumours spread through the British Government of this unpredictable, eloquent man determined to free his people, Gandhi stated his position outright to Lord Reading, the viceroy of India, in *Young India* on 15 December 1921: "Lord Reading must understand that non-cooperators are at war with the government. They have declared rebellion against it." The demands had been laid down, and Gandhi and his growing band of followers were ready to unleash their own brand of resistance.



Gandhi's attempts to establish a law practice in Bombay were hindered by his shyness

Image Source: LIFE Photo Archive

SERVING HARD TIME

Gandhi viewed his time in prison as a vital part of all his movements, writing: "Freedom is to be wooed only inside prison walls and sometimes on gallows." He saw the sacrifice of pleading guilty and spending time behind bars as a step in connecting himself to his thousands of followers. He submitted peacefully to his arrests, believing the government would be converted by his quiet determination in suffering for a just cause. He spent six years and ten months in jail throughout his life, first entering aged 39 and leaving for the last time at 75 years old. Here is a selection of his time behind bars in Yervada Central Jail.

10 MARCH 1922 – 5 FEBRUARY 1924

A mass protest in the market town of Chauri Chaura turned violent, during which protestors burned down the police station and killed 22 people. Gandhi was horrified by the violence but was arrested and convicted of sedition.

5 MAY 1930 – 26 JANUARY 1931

A new campaign of civil disobedience was launched and Gandhi protested the salt tax with his Salt March. He encouraged the population to illegally make salt by boiling seawater, for which he was promptly thrown in prison with his fellow protestors.

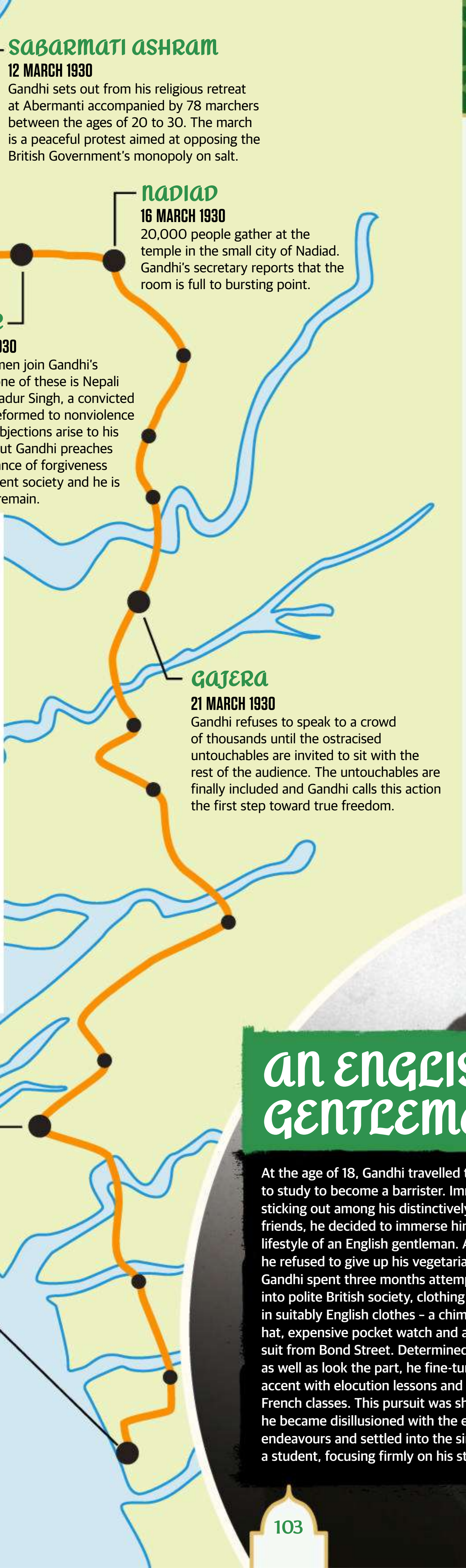
4 JANUARY 1932 – 23 AUGUST 1933

After attending the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi was imprisoned again. He was released but was later arrested yet again following a new civil disobedience campaign, in this instance boycotting liquor and foreign cloth.

9 AUGUST 1942 – 6 MAY 1944

The Congress Party passed its Quit India Movement, which encouraged civil disobedience, prompting mass walkouts by workers all over India. As a result the entire Congress Working Committee, including Gandhi himself, was arrested.

THE SALT MARCH



SABARMATI ASHRAM

12 MARCH 1930

Gandhi sets out from his religious retreat at Abermanti accompanied by 78 marchers between the ages of 20 to 30. The march is a peaceful protest aimed at opposing the British Government's monopoly on salt.

ASLALI

12 MARCH 1930

Already struggling with rheumatism, the first day of Gandhi's march ends 21km (13mi) from the starting point. Gandhi speaks to a large crowd and tells them that the salt tax is inhuman and is financially crippling the country.

NADIAD

16 MARCH 1930

20,000 people gather at the temple in the small city of Nadiad. Gandhi's secretary reports that the room is full to bursting point.

MATAR

14 MARCH 1930

Two more men join Gandhi's marchers; one of these is Nepali Kharag Bahadur Singh, a convicted murderer reformed to nonviolence in prison. Objections arise to his presence, but Gandhi preaches the importance of forgiveness in a nonviolent society and he is allowed to remain.

GAJERA

21 MARCH 1930

Gandhi refuses to speak to a crowd of thousands until the ostracised untouchables are invited to sit with the rest of the audience. The untouchables are finally included and Gandhi calls this action the first step toward true freedom.

BHATGAM

30 MARCH 1930

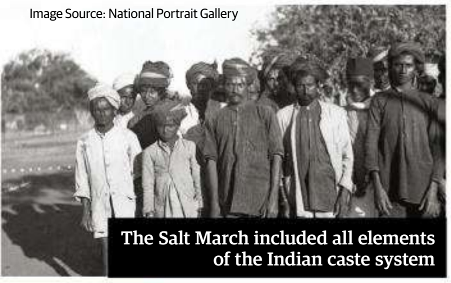
Gandhi grows angry with his followers when he discovers they have ordered a car to bring milk from a nearby city, imploring them "We are marching in the name of God [...] Do not ride if you can walk, this is not a battle to be conducted with money."

DANDI

Thousands followed Gandhi from Ahmadabad to protest the salt taxes

Image Source: Gandhiserve.org

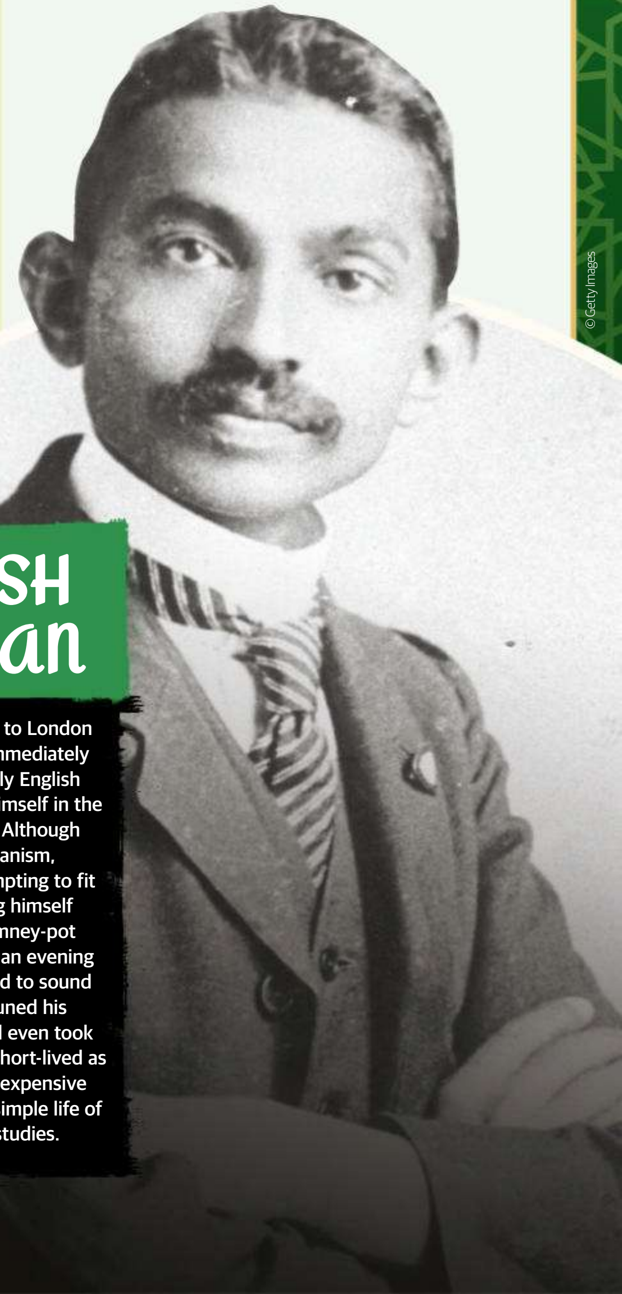
Image Source: National Portrait Gallery



The Salt March included all elements of the Indian caste system

Clothing himself in the dress of the common man, Gandhi connected with all rungs of society. He became the Mahatma (great soul) and crowds swarmed to catch a glimpse of him. Travelling the county, Gandhi encouraged the people to rid themselves of British control by boycotting British products, adopting the use of local handicrafts and embracing the true essence of their homeland.

With its charismatic figurehead, the movement soon gathered momentum, and when his fellow activists were arrested, Gandhi signed a manifesto that called on every soldier and civilian to abandon their posts and find another means of livelihood. To the shock of the British, thousands of people all over India followed the words of the Mahatma. However, as the movement grew in strength it took on a life of its own and Gandhi struggled to keep a firm grip on it. On 17 November 1921, violent riots erupted and Europeans were assaulted on the streets. Dismayed at the descent of his movement into that which he loathed most of all, violence, Gandhi used his body as a means of protest and fasted to quell the fire.



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AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

At the age of 18, Gandhi travelled to London to study to become a barrister. Immediately sticking out among his distinctively English friends, he decided to immerse himself in the lifestyle of an English gentleman. Although he refused to give up his vegetarianism, Gandhi spent three months attempting to fit into polite British society, clothing himself in suitably English clothes – a chimney-pot hat, expensive pocket watch and an evening suit from Bond Street. Determined to sound as well as look the part, he fine-tuned his accent with elocution lessons and even took French classes. This pursuit was short-lived as he became disillusioned with the expensive endeavours and settled into the simple life of a student, focusing firmly on his studies.

The violence confirmed British fears that the country was at boiling point and over one month 30,000 people were imprisoned. Harsh laws that prohibited volunteer organisations, meetings and processions were forcibly imposed. Fearing the revolution would be muzzled, Congress appointed Gandhi as the sole executive authority, pressing the need for immediate action. He did not disappoint.

With the needs of the masses bearing down upon him, Gandhi called for mass civil disobedience, which he outlined as "a sort of general upheaval on the political plane – the government ceases to function [...] the police stations, the courts, the offices etc. all cease to be government property and shall be taken charge of by the people". Gandhi encouraged a mass defiance of all laws to create the state of India, whether the British wanted it or not.

The movement came to a crashing halt before it could even begin. In Chauri Chaura, constables opened fire on a peaceful procession of protestors, expended their ammo and then barricaded themselves in the police station. Driven to frustration and desperation, the marchers set fire to the building. As the terrified policemen fled from the flames the protestors leapt on them, hacking 22 of them to pieces.

Horrified by this barbaric action under the guise of his peaceful movement, Gandhi revoked his plans for civil disobedience, fearing his nonviolent message had dissolved into total and utter chaos. Despite his immediate condemnation of the violence, on 10 March Gandhi was arrested. Polite, abiding and eloquent, he immediately pleaded guilty and asked the judge to enforce the highest penalty upon him, or else resign. Taken aback by the humility of this remarkable man, the judge commented that Gandhi was unlike anyone he had ever tried or was likely to try again before sentencing him to six years' imprisonment.

When Gandhi emerged from prison on 5 February 1924 it was to a very different India. Without his leadership the national unity had collapsed. He was accused of awaking the masses prematurely, to which he responded, "I would do nothing to put them asleep again." In response to the disunity and violence the country had been swept up in, Gandhi conducted a 21-day fast. This seemed to work, and opposing groups met at a 'Unity Conference'. Once again, he had assembled the pieces of a broken India.

Gandhi may have been a unifying force, but even he couldn't deny the fractures that ran through the country he loved, and for the next three years he moved away from politics, focusing on rebuilding the nation from scratch. In 1928, inspired by a successful large-scale nonviolent resistance by the peasants of Bardoli, Gandhi returned to the spotlight. Civil disobedience was embraced again, and on 26 January 1930, Gandhi published the Declaration of Independence of India.

Using himself as a vessel for change, Gandhi announced he would lead the movement by

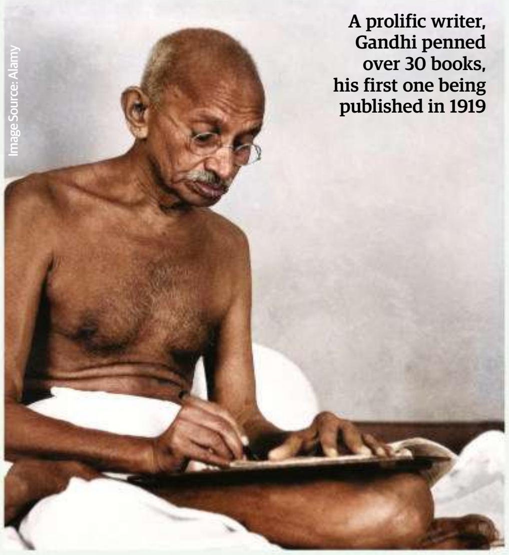

A prolific writer, Gandhi penned over 30 books, his first one being published in 1919

Image Source: Alamy

INDIA'S ROAD TO FREEDOM

1817

The rebellion begins
The landed militia of Odisha, known as the Paiks, form an armed rebellion against the ruling British East India Company. The rebellion spreads across the state but is brutally ended by the British forces. Although British rule is re-established, discontent and unrest remains. **1817**

1857

Civil revolt
Anger grows among the Indian soldiers due to the frequent racial and religious discrimination suffered at the hands of British soldiers. Revolts break out and civil rebellion follows. The revolts are crushed and the British Government passes the Government of India Act to increase their control. **1857**

1885

Political unrest
The Indian National Congress is formed, initially serving as a debating society. By 1900 the Congress has become an all-India political organisation. An offshoot radical group push for revolution against the British but the leader, Tilak, is arrested and the offensive is stalled. **1885**

1905

Divide and rule
Viceroy Lord Curzon orders the partition of Bengal. Many Indians view this as an attempt to disturb the nationalist movement and an example of the British policy of 'divide and rule'. Bengals storm the streets in anger. **1905**

1916

Lucknow Pact
After millions of Indian soldiers serve in the Great War, the Congress and nationalist movement unite to demand a reward for their sacrifices. The Lucknow Pact is formed as a formal agreement to pressure Britain to give Indians more power in their own country. **1916**

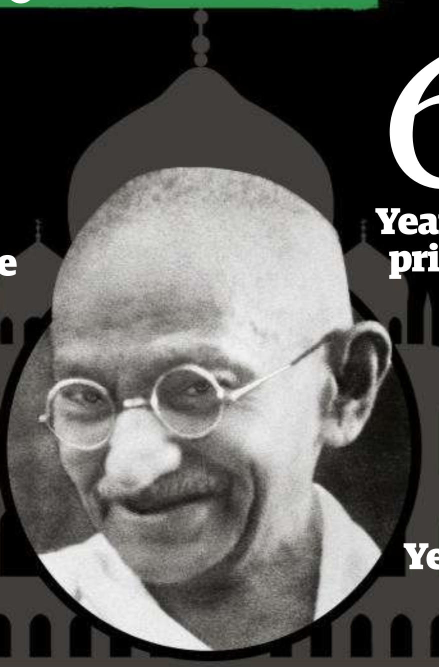
protesting the salt tax that hit the poorest in the land by prohibiting them to produce their own salt. Frail and suffering with rheumatism, the 61-year-old and a growing band of marchers walked the 88 kilometres (241 miles) from Abermanti to Dandi. The marchers included an array of people, from the ostracised untouchables, the lowest castes of society, to decorated scholars. Many struggled to keep pace with their elderly but determined leader. Upon finally reaching Dandi, millions watched as Gandhi knelt to the ground, raised a lump of salty mud to the sky and declared, "With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire."

Gandhi was arrested, but his journey emblazed the hearts of the people and his arrest only served to further stimulate the masses. Less than a year later the government, under heavy pressure,

Image Source: Alamy

Gandhi arrives in Folkestone, Kent, in September 1931 to embark on a tour of Britain

GANDHI BY NUMBERS



5
Nobel Peace Prize nominations

6
Years in prison

14
arrests

89
Years of British rule in India

80,000
Kilometres walked during his campaigns from 1913 to 1938

250,000
People who attended his funeral

Bella Personcina.

3 STAGES OF THE FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE

1. NON-COOPERATION 1920-1922

The non-cooperation movement was in resistance to the British occupation of India through nonviolent means. Gandhi encouraged the boycotting of British goods, as well as walkouts by public service and factory workers. Despite his wishes the protests soon turned violent. Gandhi fasts in an effort to quell the bloodshed.

2. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE 1930-1931

Led by Gandhi's beliefs in nonviolent resistance, the civil disobedience movement aimed to free India from British control by actively breaking laws. Known best for the Dandi Salt March, where Gandhi encouraged the masses to break the Salt Laws, civil disobedience soon spread across India with widespread lawbreaking and refusal to pay taxes.

3. QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT 1942-1944

After a speech calling for immediate Indian independence, Gandhi and almost the entire Indian Congress were arrested and placed in jail. Although the British were able to quell the small-scale violence that occurred, the Quit India Movement united the Indian people against British rule and cemented the demand for Indian independence.

Timeline image: United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division; Dore chakravarty-commonswiki; The Hindustan Times

1919
Gandhi arrives
Initially in support of a unified territory between Britain and India, Gandhi's strategy of nonviolent disobedience attracts millions. After the Amritsar Massacre, where British soldiers gun down unarmed protesters, the idea of unity is replaced by the quest for independence. **1919**

1919
Government of India
The British Government introduces the Government of India Act. As a result, British officials and Indian legislators share power in some areas. A number of areas are transferred to Indian control, such as health. **23 December 1919**

1928
Independence day
At an all-party conference in Bombay, a constitution for India is written that demands the British Government give complete independence to India or countrywide civil disobedience would be launched. **1928**

1930
Civil disobedience
Violent clashes occur throughout the country. For years the Indians fight for freedom, and the Government of India Act of 1935 aims to achieve provincial autonomy. **1930**

1942

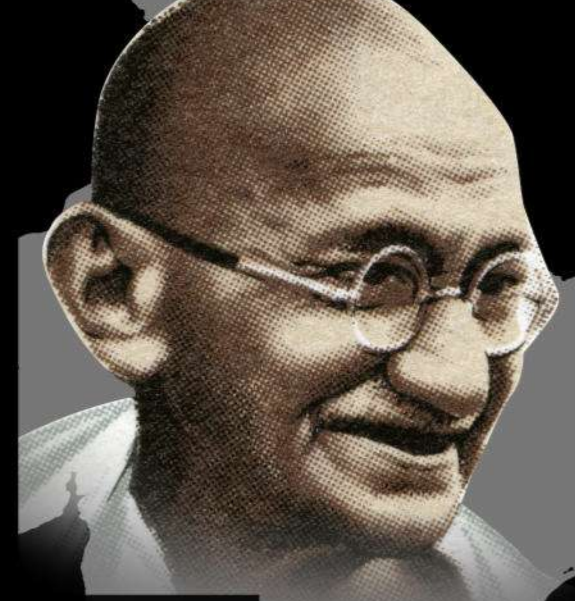
Quit India Movement
Under Gandhi's influence the Quit India Movement is launched. Teachers and workers walk out on their jobs to try to hold the British war effort hostage. When leading political figures are arrested the protests turn violent. **1942**

1947

The Hindustan Times
INDIA INDEPENDENT : BRITISH RULE ENDS

Independence declared
The partition of British India into India and Pakistan is announced. On 14 August the Indian Independence Act passes Parliament and the next day India is independent. **1947**

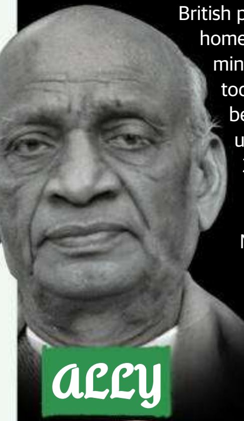
ENEMIES AND ALLIES



SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL

One of the founding fathers of the Republic of India, Patel helped lead the country into becoming an independent nation. Patel organised nonviolent civil disobedience against oppressive British policies. He became the first home minister and deputy prime minister of India and is known today as the 'iron man of India' because of his fierce views and uncompromising stance. In 2018, a 182-metre (597-foot), 67,000-tonne statue of Patel was unveiled beside the Narmada River in Gujarat.

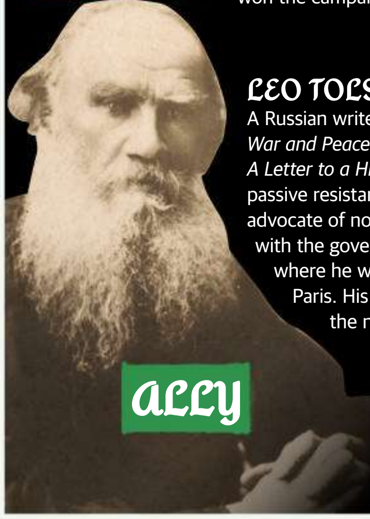
Influence on Gandhi:
Gandhi wrote of Patel, his loyal supporter: "Without the help of Vallabhbhai Patel, we should not have won the campaign."



LEO TOLSTOY

A Russian writer and philosopher best known for writing *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy also wrote *A Letter to a Hindu*, which preached the idea of using passive resistance to overthrow colonial rule in India. An advocate of nonviolence, Tolstoy became disillusioned with the government after his experiences in the army, where he witnessed a horrific public execution in Paris. His Christian beliefs were centred on loving the neighbour rather than serving the church.

Influence on Gandhi:
Gandhi classed himself as Tolstoy's 'disciple', writing to him frequently and translating his works into his native Gujarati.



NATHURAM GODSE

A Hindu nationalist, Godse was opposed to Gandhi's policies, which he considered to be pro-Muslim. An activist and member of many Hindu nationalist groups, Godse believed that under Gandhi's leadership India would be enslaved to Muslim beliefs and Hindus would suffer. He also blamed Gandhi for hundreds of thousands of deaths that occurred as a result of the partition of India.

Influence on Gandhi:
On 30 January 1948, Godse shot Gandhi in the chest three times from point-blank range, ending his life and fight for justice.

MUHAMMAD ALI JINNAH

The founder of Pakistan, Jinnah served as Pakistan's first governor-general and his birthday is celebrated as a national holiday. Jinnah was opposed to Gandhi's campaign of nonviolent resistance, claiming it to be political anarchy, instead promoting the use of constitutional means to achieve self-government. Many in India oppose the popular view of Jinnah held in Pakistan, viewing him to be the 'demon who divided the land'.

Influence on Gandhi:
With opposing characters, the two men were constantly butting heads in the political world, but despite that they shared a personal admiration for each other.

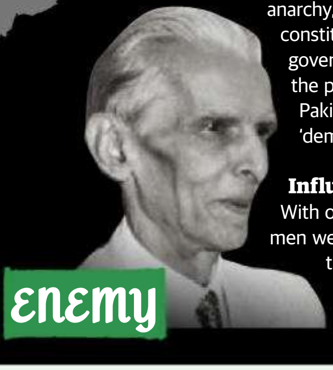


Image Source : Government of India work; Getty Images; Mountbatten_Jinnah.jpg: No 9 Army Film &amp; Photographic Unit derivative work: Wehwalt

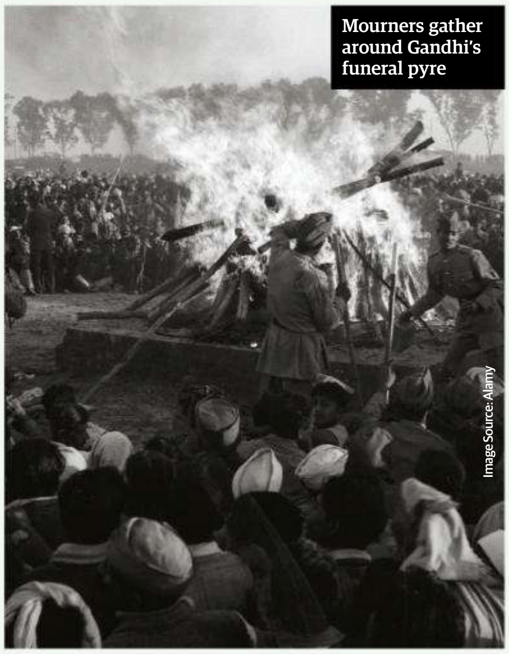
released all civil-disobedience prisoners under the agreement that the movement was called off. But as the movement rose from the flames, Gandhi and almost the entire Congress were jailed once more. The British Government acted swiftly and viciously to stop the ongoing rebellion at the source, but the people's spirits could not be dampened so easily.

When Gandhi returned to politics in 1939 it was with complete focus on independence. The outbreak of war provided the ideal environment to finally achieve his goal. Outraged by India's inclusion in the Second World War without any consultation, all congressmen resigned from office. Gandhi proclaimed the hypocrisy of India fighting in a war to achieve democratic freedom when Indians themselves did not enjoy such luxury.

Escalating his demand for freedom, Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement, encouraging passive resistance to withhold the much-needed Indian support in Britain's hour of need. Gandhi urged Indians to "do or die" to achieve the freedom they had long fought for. The British reaction was instantaneous; the entire Congress Working Committee was arrested. Riots tore across the country as the fury of the people was unleashed upon any symbol of British rule, with post offices, police stations and courts torched.

After fasts in prison and being struck down with ill health, Gandhi was released. Bent but not broken, he returned as the head of the non-cooperation movement in 1944. Fearing a revolution, the British finally hammered out the agreement for independence in March 1947, and on 15 August that same year it became official.

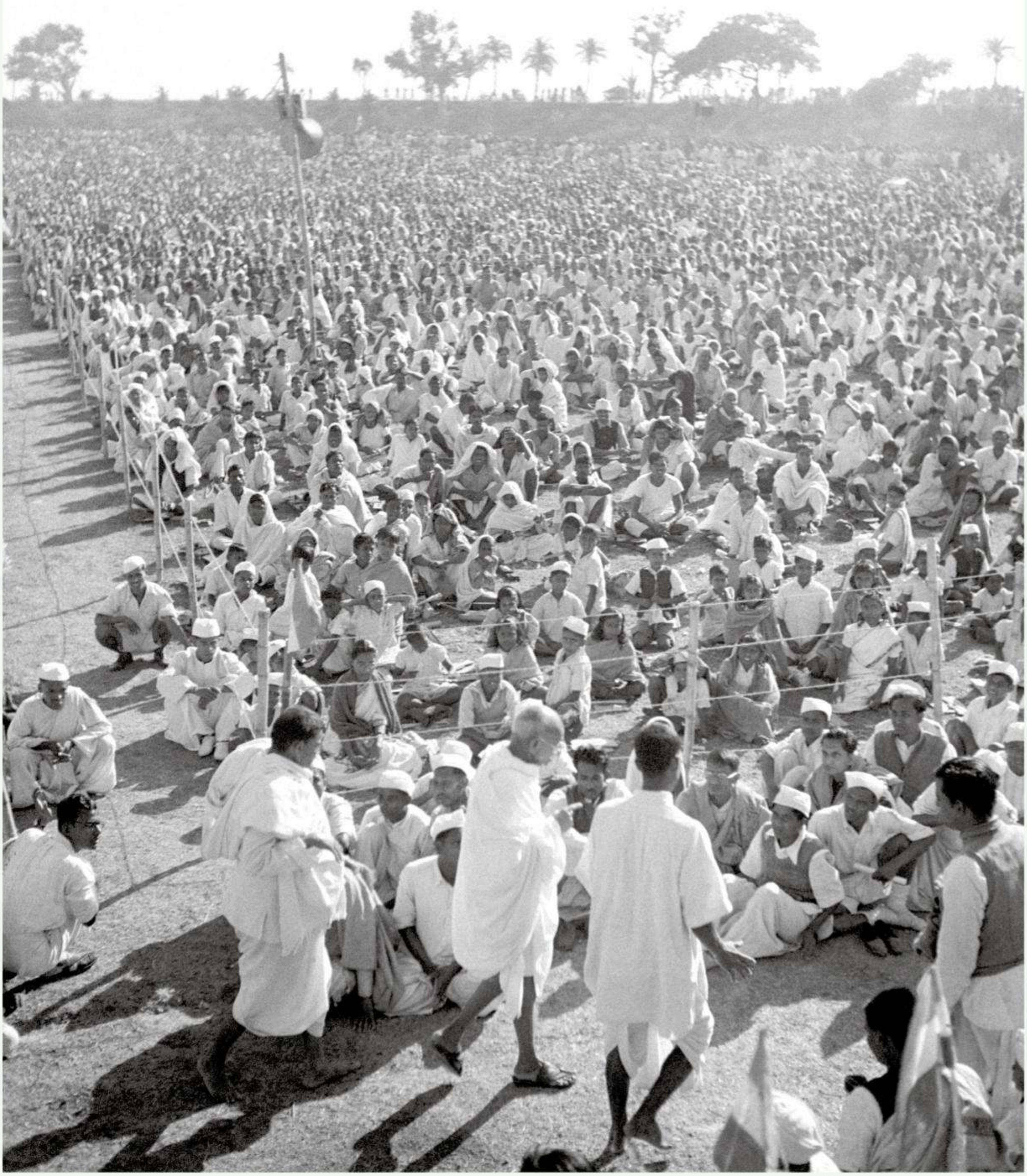
India's long-awaited independence can be attributed to many factors, but no one man captured the hearts and minds of the Indian people like Mahatma Gandhi. The freedom the masses needed had been achieved long before independence was declared. Gandhi, with his inspiring words, actions and sacrifices, had freed the people not only from British rule but also from the prisons in which their minds had been incarcerated. There will never be another like him.



Mourners gather around Gandhi's funeral pyre

Image Source: Alamy

Gandhi at a mass meeting in Bengal in 1945



© Getty Images

A TRYST WITH DESTINY

In the wake of the Second World War, India was in a unique position to push for independence. The British Raj was at an end

Written by April Madden

The rumblings of Indian independence began long before the seismic shock of the Second World War jolted the hands of imperial, colonial Europe away from its overseas territories. Local empires had always battled for gains across the subcontinent, and factionalism within the empires that rose and fell, jockeying for position, had been rife for thousands of years. Resistance to British rule, particularly the iron fist of the British East India Company, had always bubbled just below the surface, and when this awkward fact had to be presented to the British public at all, it was still within the context of localised "rebellions", "uprisings", and most often "mutinies" - this last with its connotations of disobedience and disorder - that happened on a small scale among an even smaller group of disaffected refuseniks. The image that India's imperial rulers wanted to present, of a joyful Victorian India, happy with railways and cricket and afternoon tea and the rule of the beneficent overseas empress who had brought it these things, was always a colonial fallacy. It's ironic, then, that the late British Empire eventually contributed to its own downfall in the subcontinent. Rebellions were minimised and dismissed as petty, ignorant rioting, and the standard Victorian answer to such misguided violence - after bloodily mopping up the perpetrators, of course - was nipping any further intransigence in the bud before it even started by indoctrinating the next generation with what was believed to be a decent moral education. In India, however, it got more than it bargained for.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was a Whig politician who, in the face of some dire financial straits, resigned his position as MP for Calne, Wiltshire and took a job as a member of the Governor-General's Council. Travelling to India in

The inauguration of the Republic of India on 15 August 1947

© Firefly, Alamy, Future/ Generated by Adobe Firefly AI

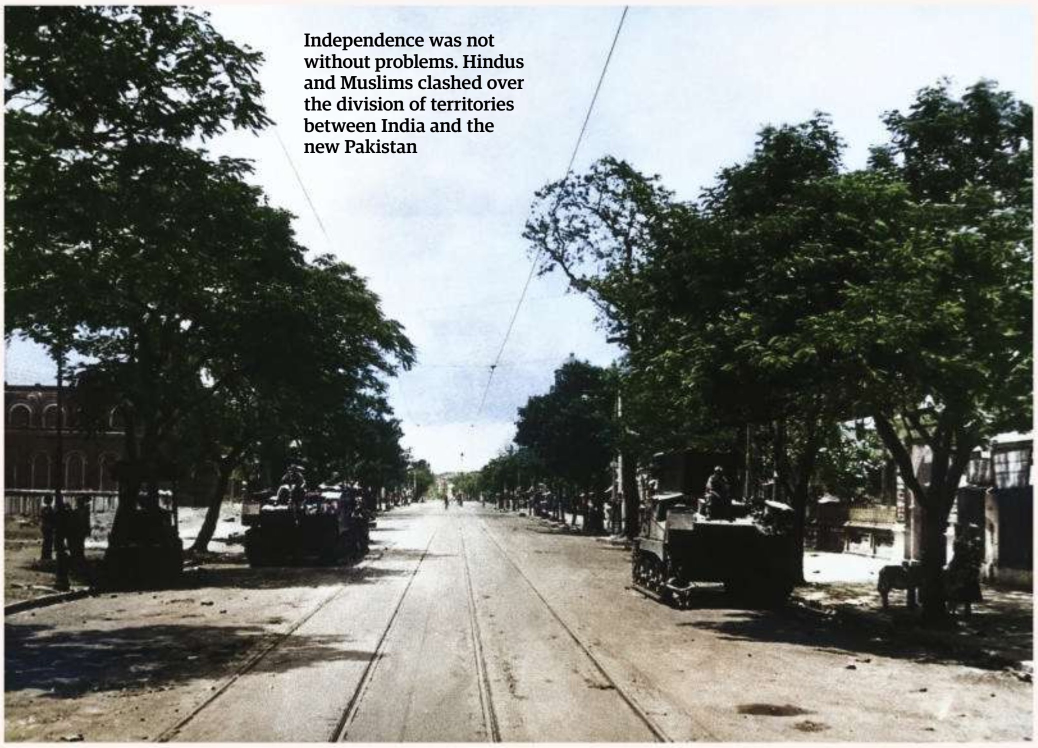
1834, he published a document called *Minute on Indian Education*. He recommended that English be the default language of secondary education on the subcontinent and that English-speaking Indians – until now relegated to the roles of upper servants in British households – should be trained as teachers. Macaulay was in fact something of a firebrand; he railed against the traditional doctrine of Britain's education policies overseas, which largely settled for teaching colonial populations a little reading, writing and arithmetic, enough science to understand the basic principles of modern Victorian hygiene and agriculture, a heavy dose of Christianity, and just enough of their own local history and literature to engender a sense of conservative pride.

Much of Macaulay's tract suffers from the usual stereotypes of his race and class – he described India's wealth of dialects and languages as "so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them" and dismissed its rich literary and mythological heritage, saying that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India". Nonetheless, his focus on enshrining English at the heart of the Victorian Indian secondary education system accidentally produced a positive outcome for the Indian independence movement.

Previously fractured and balkanised by language, creed and caste, a common language meant that these disparate groups could communicate their common cause to each other. Moreover, they could communicate it to their colonial rulers too. Soon it could no longer be claimed that the inhabitants of India were backward, ignorant peasants, rebelling just for the love of trouble. By 1885, the Indian National Congress had been formed. Its founding 72 members had mainly been educated in the new style and were now teachers, journalists and lawyers. They were by no means entirely representative of India – they were members of the nascent urban elite, and the resolutions they discussed were always underpinned by expressions of loyalty to the British Empire – but they did represent a positive start.

The Indian independence movement now turned away from armed resistance and focused instead on organisation, collective bargaining and direct action. Religious groups played a key role in this, especially with the renaissance of Indian history, literature and poetry, which fuelled nationalistic pride, particularly among Hindus. The cotton industry began to realise how much of India's economic lifeblood had been drained by the East India Company and other profiteers. Merchants had bought unrefined cotton cheaply in India, shipped it back to Britain's Industrial Revolution era mills for cheap processing, then sold it back to India at exorbitant prices. Boycotts were introduced and foreign cloth imports ritually burned. The cotton industry had brought the Industrial Revolution to India, and now its mills produced Indian cotton for Indian people, sold at reasonable prices, while foreign merchants were now locked out of the previously lucrative industry.

By the 1940s the only political force in British India that still wholeheartedly supported armed rebellion was the Communist Party of India. When in 1946 sailors in the Indian Navy mutinied en masse to protest against poor wages and living conditions onboard ship, only the Communists were prepared to stand with them. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh organisations stood firm in their condemnation, eventually brokering a peace deal between the British administration and its


Independence was not without problems. Hindus and Muslims clashed over the division of territories between India and the new Pakistan

MOUNTAIN WARFARE

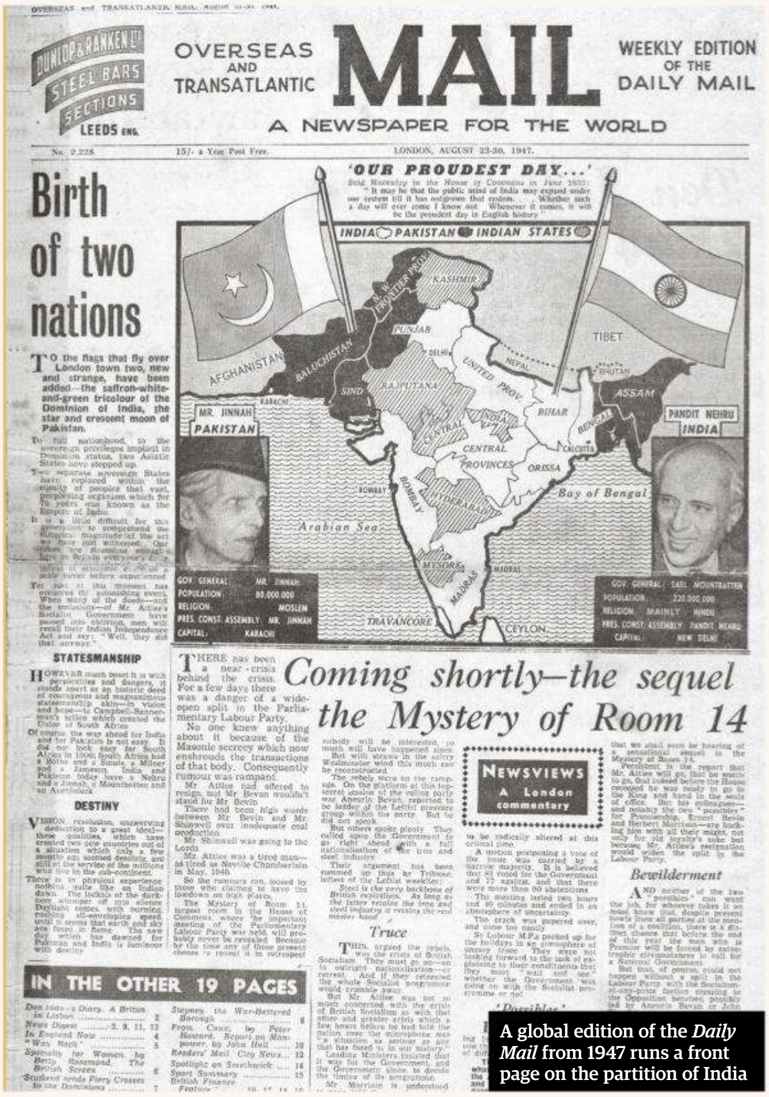
The Sino-Indian War of 1962 saw the two Asian behemoths clash over the limits of their territories

The border between the ancient land of China and the new, modern India was porous, malleable and well above sea level. Far from being dismissed as inaccessible mountain wastes, however, both sides were keen to lay claim to the disputed areas. China had historically claimed the Himalayan land of Tibet and in the wake of the Second World War demanded it as restitution for its suffering. With Tibet annexed, its spiritual and political leader, the Dalai Lama, fled to India and set up a government in exile. China was furious with its new neighbour, who offered the Dalai Lama asylum.

Like India's friend the Soviet Union, China was a communist state, but Russo-Chinese relations had worsened during the Cold War as each adhered to its own unique principles for communist rule. The Soviet Union was thus in no position to broker peace between its new and former allies, and while it and the rest of the world were distracted by the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, China sent troops into Ladakh and the Aksai Chin region.

This was a mistake: the mountain winter was setting in, and though China had the advantage of capturing the high ground in Arunachal Pradesh, the freezing temperatures and high altitude claimed the lives of troops on both sides, while moving men and materiel around the mountain peaks was a logistical nightmare. Nonetheless, India, which had been confident China wouldn't attack, was caught on the back foot and consequently suffered heavy casualties of its own. Only the threat of potential airstrikes, after India requested military aid from Britain and the U.S., was enough to press China to call a ceasefire and retreat to its former borders. India's ill-preparedness for the conflict emboldened Pakistan to go to war over the disputed territory of Kashmir three years later.

Indian soldiers on border patrol in the mountains during the Sino-Indian War of 1962



OVERSEAS and TRANSATLANTIC MAIL, AUGUST 23-30, 1947.

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OF THE
DAILY MAIL

A NEWSPAPER FOR THE WORLD

No. 2,228 | 15/- a Year Post Free. | LONDON, AUGUST 23-30, 1947.

Birth of two nations

TO the flags that fly over London town two, new and strange, have been added—the saffron-white-and-green tricolour of the Dominion of India, the star and crescent moon of Pakistan.

To full nationhood, to the sovereign privileges implicit in Dominion status, two Asiatic States have stepped up.

Two separate sovereign States have replaced within the comity of peoples that vast, perplexing organism which for 70 years was known as the Empire of India.

'OUR PROUDEST DAY...'

Said Macaulay in the House of Commons in June 1833: "It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system. . . . Whether such a day will ever come I know not. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history."

GOV. GENERAL:	MR. JINNAH
POPULATION:	80,000,000
RELIGION:	MOSLEM
PRES. CONST. ASSEMBLY:	MR. JINNAH
CAPITAL:	KARACHI

GOV. GENERAL:	EARL MOUNTBATTEN
POPULATION:	220,000,000
RELIGION:	MAINLY HINDU
PRES. CONST. ASSEMBLY:	PANDIT NEHRU
CAPITAL:	NEW DELHI

STATESMANSHIP

DESTINY

Coming shortly—the sequel the Mystery of Room 14

THERE has been a near-crisis behind the crisis. For a few days there was a danger of a wide-open split in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

No one knew anything about it because of the Masonic secrecy which now enshrouds the transactions of that body. Consequently rumour was rampant.

NEWSVIEWS
A London commentary

Truce

Bewilderment

IN THE OTHER 19 PAGES

A global edition of the *Daily Mail* from 1947 runs a front page on the partition of India

फिर उठादें
दुई मिटादें

Indians take to the streets of Bombay (now Mumbai) in celebration of independence, 15 August 1947

erstwhile Indian sailors. They had a very good reason for doing so: the independence that they had been working towards for the past 60 years was now on the brink of reality. The huge financial cost of the Second World War, and the reshaping of international relations in its wake, had left a fiscally devastated Britain, led by the radical Labour government of Clement Atlee, that needed to pump the resources it had left into rebuilding its Blitz-raddled homeland rather than spreading them thinly across its vast overseas territories. The process of dismantling the empire had begun.

In 1947, the Indian Independence Act was passed. This split the old British India into two distinct nations – India and Pakistan (Pakistan would later be split again, with East Pakistan becoming Bangladesh). The border provinces of Punjab and Bengal were partitioned between the two new countries. This broadly separated the new realms along religious lines; while many independence organisations had stopped engaging in armed insurrection against the British, sectarian violence between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims had still been a problem. The new division was aimed at lessening these conflicts, but in the immediate wake of the partition of India they only intensified.

Into the volatility of this situation the princely states stirred further chaos. Ostensibly self-governing under British auspices, the rajas, princes and nawabs who controlled the princely states had little interest in losing their hereditary rule to an elected national government. Many princely rulers had historically been lavished with honours, titles and ranks by the British Government in exchange for their cooperation and had benefitted from British prohibitions against localised warfare. They feared – rightly, given the circumstances – that the British withdrawal would remove these protections and privileges. Mahatma Gandhi was inclined to soothe and reassure them that the new Congress wouldn't interfere in their internal affairs of state, but Jawaharlal Nehru was fiercely opposed to them, saying that they could not be separate from the new, postcolonial India and that only the people of the states, not their hereditary rulers, had the right to choose how they would be governed. His language turned forceful, pointing out that no princely state – not even Hyderabad, with its 16 million inhabitants – could stand against the might of the independent Indian army. He was right.

In some areas, notably Bengal and Punjab, the divisions between religions, between what had been princely states and the former British India, or between India and the new nation of Pakistan, were not clear cut. Here followers of different religions lived cheek-by-jowl and access to the modern infrastructure left by the British – roads, railways, water, electricity – wasn't easy to split equally or fairly. In particular, the Sikh community felt that it would be left as a small – and likely persecuted – minority no matter which way the borderlines fell and called for its own small independent state called Khalistan, a request that was denied.

The infamous Radcliffe Line that bisected the provinces of Punjab and Bengal was eventually drawn by a team of lawyers without local knowledge. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, its head, had never been to India before he was tasked with dividing this particular part of it and had no contacts among the former British Raj, let alone the new Indian government. The final division was eventually made in secret and resulted in yet more conflict and disruption as skirmishes erupted all along the new border while refugees from either side surged into what they hoped were safer territories. Radcliffe himself refused payment for his work and later burned all of his maps and papers, refusing

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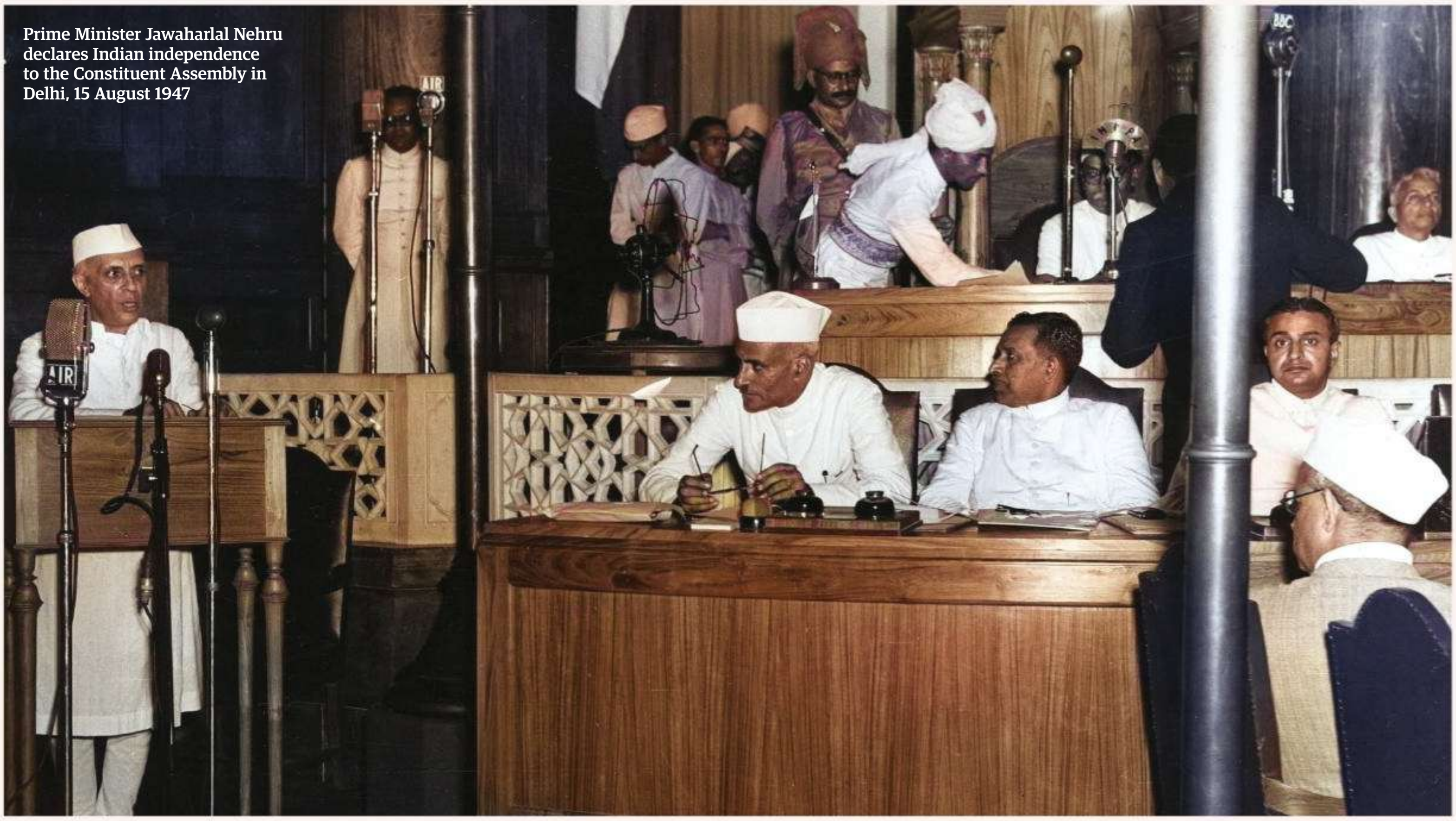


Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru declares Indian independence to the Constituent Assembly in Delhi, 15 August 1947

to speak of the events again. Like similar postwar divisions in the Middle East, the Radcliffe Line has disrupted communities, created tensions and fuelled decades of sectarian conflict since its inception. Leading the new India towards its destiny was going to be a complicated job.

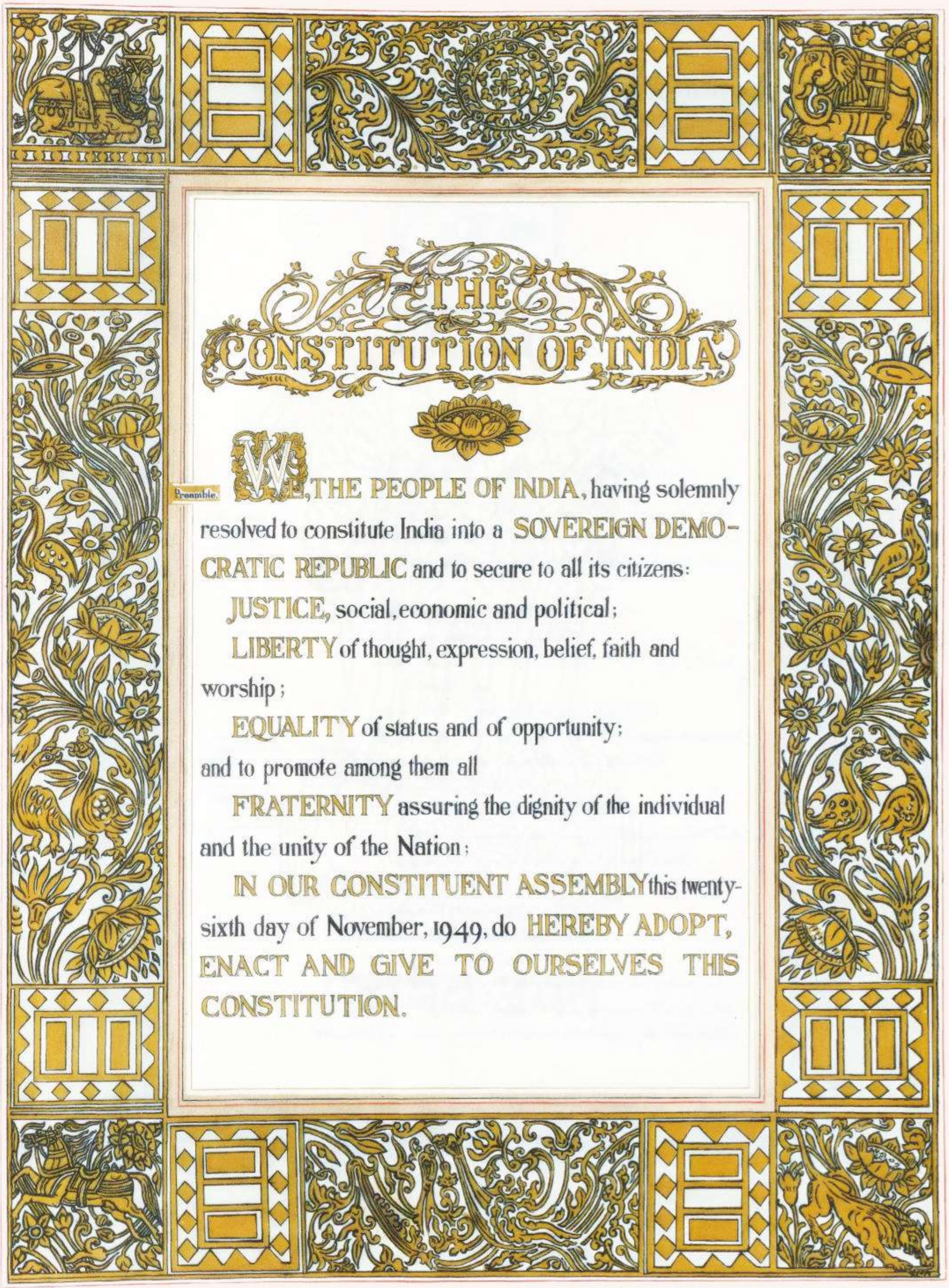
Into the role of the Republic of India's first prime minister stepped Jawaharlal Nehru. The previous generations of this former barrister's family had reaped the benefits of the Macaulay education system, and he himself had in fact been educated in Britain, first at Harrow School and then Trinity College, Cambridge. This former Congress member and fierce opponent of both British colonialism and the princely states moderated some of his more militant tendencies as he took power, espousing values of pluralism, secularism, equality and democracy in his famous 'Tryst with destiny' speech on the eve of independence. And his focus didn't end at India's new borders.

Aware that this new state had been created at a tumultuous time and was still finding its own feet, Nehru had no interest in involving the nascent Republic of India in global politics. Having tried holding Britain's feet to the fire during the Second World War – his attempted bargain of Indian troops in exchange for a promise of Indian independence after the war was rejected – Nehru wasn't about to stand side-by-side with the British in the new conflict that had arisen: the Cold War. Instead he took India into the Non-Aligned Movement, a group of 120 nations that have no formal allegiances to any major power blocs like NATO or the former Warsaw Pact. Nehru had seen firsthand what conflicts of opposing ideologies could do. Nonetheless, India did join the British Commonwealth, and, unable to completely distance itself from the Cold War, it eventually signed the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, driven partly by American support for Pakistan. Relations between the two neighbours had worsened significantly.

For much of the late 1940s and into the '50s India had busied itself reclaiming ex-colonies and princely states in a series of annexations, beginning with Hyderabad in 1948 with Operation Polo and concluding with the Annexation of Goa from Portugal in 1961. Its solid focus on its own wheelhouse combined with its non-aligned status meant that India was seen as a nonpartisan, disinterested power that could be a valuable mediator in international disputes, however, its continuing enmity with Pakistan soon tarnished this reputation. Kashmir was a particular flashpoint for this when India rejected United Nations calls for the region to have a referendum on its own destiny. Border conflicts with China spilled over into full-scale war in 1962, and India's offer of asylum to Tibetan religious leader and pro-independence advocate the Dalai Lama further inflamed the situation. Meanwhile, India's relationship with the Soviet Union saw it take a more hands-off stance than expected on the issue of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. This relationship, along with its antipathy for Pakistan, meant that India's initially frosty relations with the United States have only just started to thaw in the last few decades.

And yet, the United States and India both have a lot in common, not least in their adherence to the principles of postcolonial constitutions drafted by the fathers of both nations in the wake of independence from Britain. India's constitution is the longest in the world and describes the nation as a union of states who govern themselves under the aegis of the national government. It describes India as a sovereign, secular, socialist and democratic republic, enshrining the rights and freedoms of its citizens and setting out the function and limitation of government figures and bodies. Enacted in 1950, the Constitution of India is a manifesto for a modern nation born out of war and the wreckage of empire, an expression of hope for going forward unburdened by the past, written by those who had experienced both the whims of petty princes and the implacable inertia of imperial administration. It is to be hoped that its exhaustive framework continues to guide India for centuries to come.

> It is estimated that between 200,000 and 2 million people died during the violence in the wake of India's partition.



THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Preamble.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

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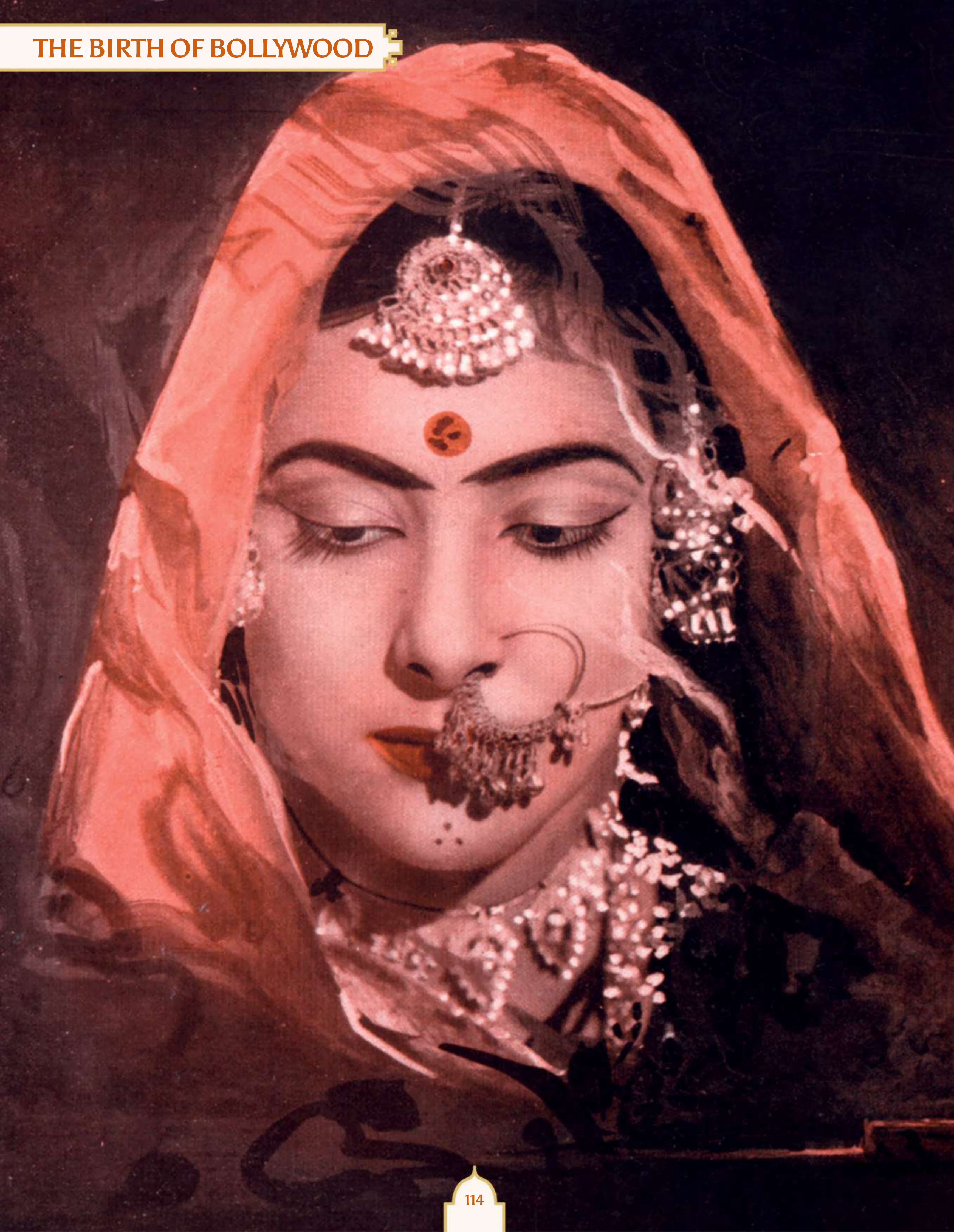


THE BIRTH OF BOLLYWOOD

Uncovering the stories and secrets of one of the world's biggest film industries

Written by Callum McKelvie

At the dawn of the 21st century, India was producing nearly 1,000 films a year, in a variety of languages and for a global fanbase. The term Bollywood no doubt conjures images of colourful musical numbers, lavish escapist action sequences and glamorous stars. Yet Bollywood has a long tradition and history within India, much of which has been defined by the country's own changes and conflicts. This gives Bollywood productions a distinct and unique flavour far removed from the more typical American and British releases that usually fill the screens at multiplexes. Bollywood refers primarily to the Mumbai film industry, which caters to a Hindi-speaking audience, but to Western audiences the term has been used to refer to Indian cinema as a whole. Stretching back to the dawn of the 20th century and the era of silent film, Bollywood's story is as striking and engaging as those of the films it produces. While it would be impossible to cover the entire history of the industry, the tropes and trends, the highs and lows, form a distinct narrative that reflects the changing tastes of Indian audiences.

The first full-length Bollywood production was created in 1913 when India was still under British rule. The film, *Raja Harishchandra*, was written, directed, produced and even distributed by Dadasaheb Phalke, now considered to be the father of Indian cinema. Based on Hindu mythology, the film was originally given a trial showing for leading citizens before being put on a much wider release. The success of *Raja Harishchandra* opened the doors for a new wave of Indian silent films and Phalke would follow it with *Mohini Bhasmasur*, perhaps just as important for featuring a female lead when acting was deemed a taboo profession for women. Phalke was also the first Indian filmmaker to export his films and took three productions to London for a trade show, where they won foreign acclaim. The director would create other masterpieces, such as 1917's *Lanka Dahan*, which was such a huge hit that cinemas were forced to begin screening the film at 7 a.m. in order to meet demand. Several other companies were formed and they capitalised on Phalke's success, producing a slew of similarly themed epics.

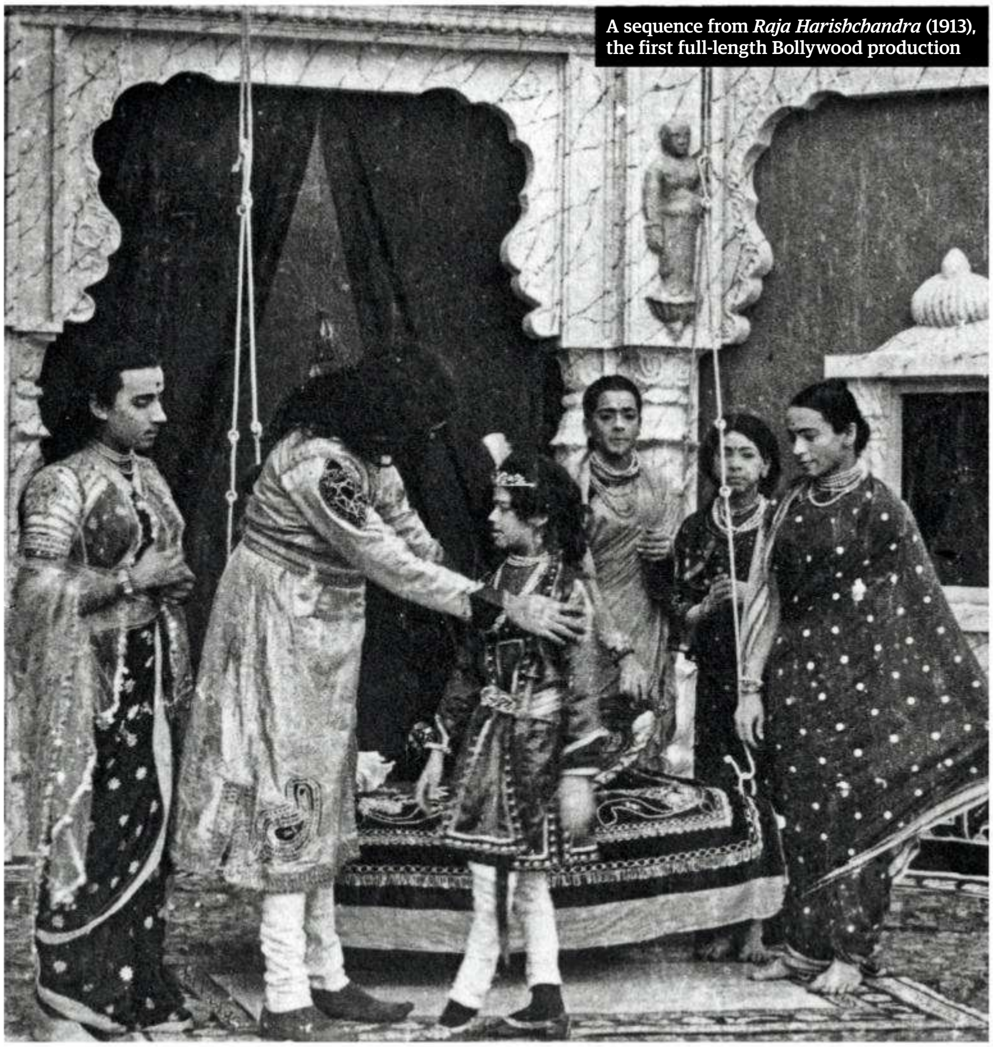
So why was early Indian cinema obsessed with films on the topic of Hindu myths and legends? As the *Encyclopedia of Hindi Cinema* explains: "Political-nationalist topics would have been taboo under British rule. Even contemporary subjects might have been resented in those orthodox times, that too in a new medium which was considered cheap, vulgar and socially unacceptable."

Despite their popularity, many of these silent films were still relatively low-budget and amateurish productions, particularly when compared to German films from the same era such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Metropolis*. These early Bollywood films were not without merit and are historically important, but they were arguably lacking the visual refinement and elegance that defined these European works. The man who would be credited with bringing technical sophistication to Indian cinema was Himanshu Rai.

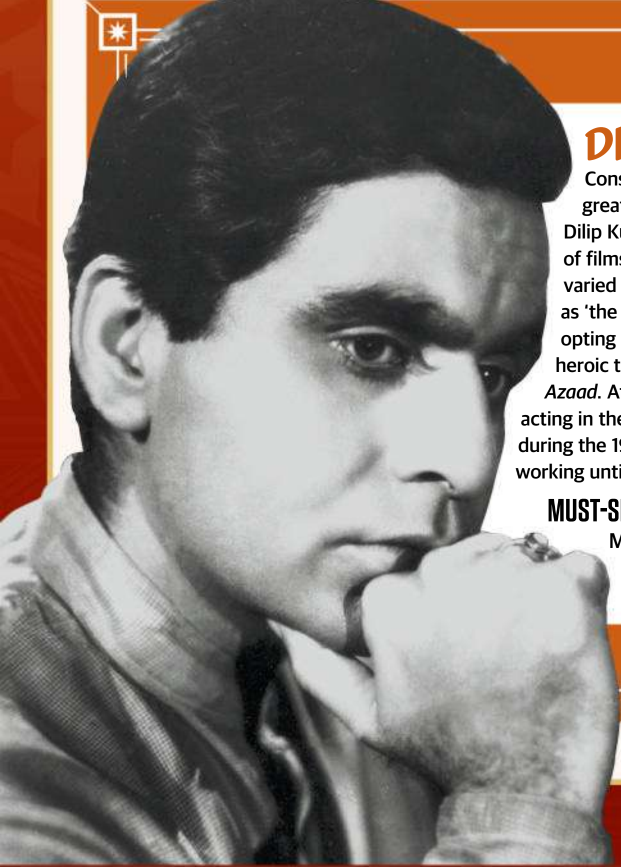
Born into a wealthy Bengal family in 1892 in Cuttack, Rai sought the advice of European filmmakers in an attempt to improve the quality of Indian productions. Subsequently, Rai would be the man behind one of India's first big-budget productions: *Prem Sanyas* (The Light of Asia) in 1925. Featuring an entirely Indian cast, including Rai himself in the role of Gautama Buddha, the film was co-produced with Emelka Studios in Munich, Germany, after Rai's attempts to convince British film studios fell through. He would follow this with a number of other co-productions with UFA, the studio behind the aforementioned German classics.

One of the most renowned traits of Bollywood productions is the sensational song and dance numbers featured in the majority of films, even movies such as 1962's *Bees Saal Baad* - ostensibly a moody gothic mystery thriller. This trait began in the early 1930s as Indian filmmakers started to experiment with the new technology of sound. As Rajiv Vijayakar explains in his paper *The Role of a Song in a Hindi Film*, songs were incorporated into the early talkie films because "in a country accustomed to folk and classical music (with huge diversities across state and language), the audiences now got to hear their simpler, hum-worthy variants in the movies. Hence film songs became instantly popular". In a world where a film with sound was not an immediate guaranteed success, "The savvier filmmakers decided that songs were the way to box-office acceptability."

The decision to incorporate songs proved hugely successful, and some of the first recording



A sequence from *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), the first full-length Bollywood production



DILIP KUMAR

Considered to be one of the greatest Indian actors of all time, Dilip Kumar starred in a variety of films throughout his long and varied career. He became known as 'the King of Tragedy' before opting to play more light-hearted heroic types in films such as 1955's *Azaad*. After taking a hiatus from acting in the late 1970s he returned during the 1980s and continued working until 1998, when he retired.

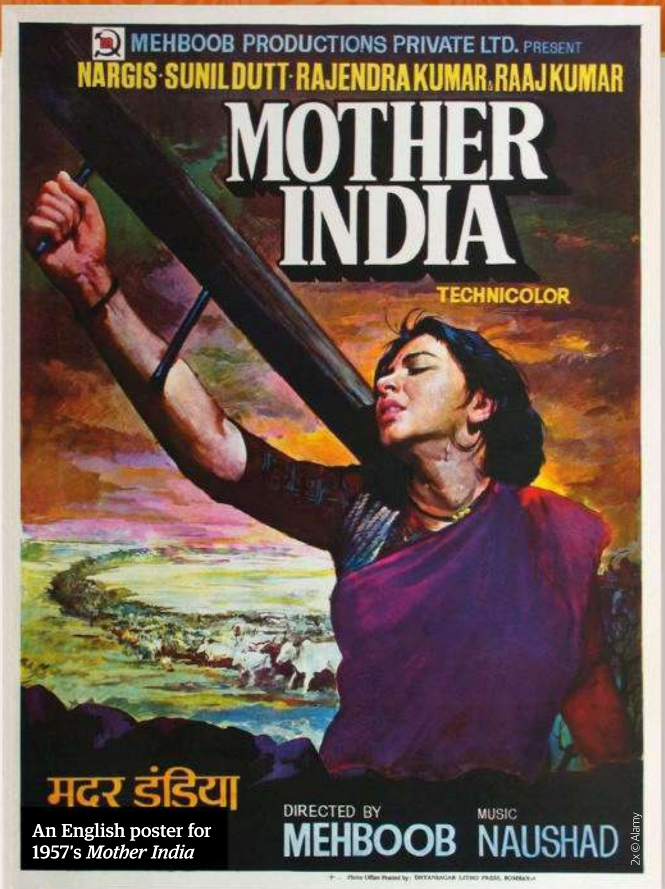
MUST-SEE FILMS:
Mughal-e-Azam (1960),
Madhumati (1958)

AMITABH BACHCHAN

Perhaps India's greatest action star, Amitabh Bachchan has starred in a wealth of cult hits and popular films. Personifying the 'angry young man' hero of the mid- to late 1970s, Bachchan would take a break from acting to enter politics, being elected to the Indian parliament in 1984. He returned to the film industry in 1990, winning a National Film award for *Agneepath*, in which he played a crime boss.

MUST-SEE FILMS:
Deewar (1975),
Don (1978)

studios in India grew out of the desire of audience members to repeatedly listen to actors sing songs from their favourite films. While many elements of Bollywood have changed, the inclusion of song and dance remains. Over the years this tradition of film songs, which began with actors singing them 'live' and often with very few dancers or supporting acts, has grown in sophistication. Now the songs are often released ahead of films and are an integral part of the viewing experience.


MEHBOOB PRODUCTIONS PRIVATE LTD. PRESENT
NARGIS·SUNIL DUTT·RAJENDRA KUMAR & RAAJ KUMAR
MOTHER INDIA
TECHNICOLOR
मदर इंडिया
DIRECTED BY MEHBOOB
MUSIC NAUSHAD

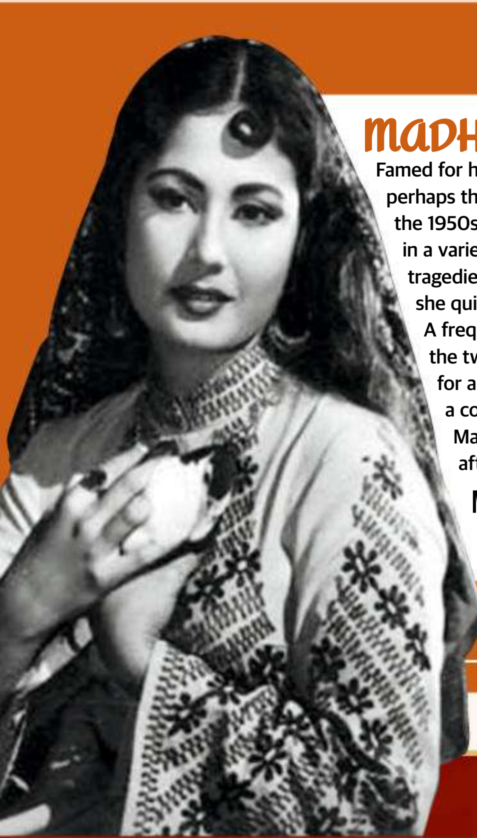
An English poster for 1957's *Mother India*

2x © Alamy

In the 1940s further changes were to come, but not just to the film industry. India itself was about to undergo arguably the single most important event in its own recent history. In 1947 the British, after 300 years of colonial rule, withdrew from India. Under the Indian Independence Act the country was split into two, Pakistan and India, each a new and separate dominion with the intention of purposefully segregating the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities. What resulted would be the biggest forced migration in recent times that was not the result of war or famine. For Bollywood, 1947 would prove to be just as important cinematically as it was politically. The most popular and highest-grossing film that year was *Jugnu*, a musical romance about class divide that shows the industry's lack of desire to confront the issue of partition. The same year also saw legends such as actor, producer and director Raj Kapoor and actress Madhubala make their debuts within the Indian film industry with the release of *Neel Kamal*. Kapoor would later become one of India's biggest stars, his work with the actress Nargis in films such as *Andaz* defining them as one of the country's biggest acting duos.

One of the most important films following partition was *Mother India* from 1957, which since its debut has become a national classic, re-released numerous times. Taking its name from the controversial 1927 polemical book by U.S. historian Katherine Mayo, which argued against Indian self-rule, the film was a fierce rebuke of the arguments stated within Mayo's work. The book has been described by the actress and author Sushmita Mukherjee as having "contained sensational material on child marriages and child brides. No wonder it was celebrated by Imperialists and condemned by Nationalists". Filmmaker Mehboob Khan saw a chance to remake his earlier work, *Aurat*, as a distinctly patriotic and nationalist production that purposefully used the book's title in a satirical manner. The film also set out to promote the empowerment of women within India in a way that directly contradicted the claims in Mayo's book. The film *Mother India* tells the story of Radha, a poor mother who faces a variety of obstacles as she struggles to raise her sons. Despite the various trials and tribulations, Radha never loses her integrity. Gayatri Chatterjee, the author of a BFI Film Classics book analysing *Mother India*, stated of the film's enduring popularity: "From 1958, for more than 40 years, every day between nine in the morning and midnight, one could stand still, close one's eyes and say to oneself, '*Mother India* is playing somewhere in India.'"

It was in the 1960s and '70s that many of the traits that now define modern Bollywood cinema truly began. While there were more artistically minded productions, it was genre cinema and all-around entertainment that became the order of the day. One of the directors who made a name during this period was Vijay Anand, whose neo-noir and Hitchcockian thrillers such as *Teesri Manzil* (The Third Floor) from 1966 and *Jewel Thief* from 1967 became huge hits at the box office. *Bees*



MADHUBALA

Famed for her beauty, Madhubala was perhaps the most popular actress of the 1950s and early 1960s. Starring in a variety of films, from romantic tragedies to thrillers and comedies, she quickly became a cinematic icon. A frequent co-star of Dilip Kumar, the two were involved romantically for a short time. Afflicted with a congenital heart condition, Madhubala passed away shortly after her 36th birthday.

MUST-SEE FILMS:
Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi (1958),
Mahal (1949)

MEENA KUMARI

Known as 'the Tragedy Queen', Kumari was popular for her roles in a string of tearjerkers and lived a life almost as distressing as those of the characters she played. She would pass away at the age of 38, mere weeks before *Pakeezah* (arguably her most famous and beloved film) was released to rave reviews and great success.

MUST-SEE FILMS:
Pakeezah (1972),
Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam (1962)

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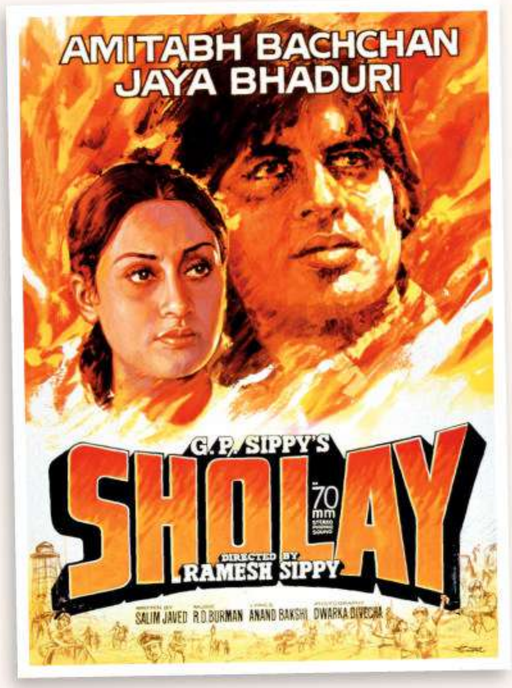
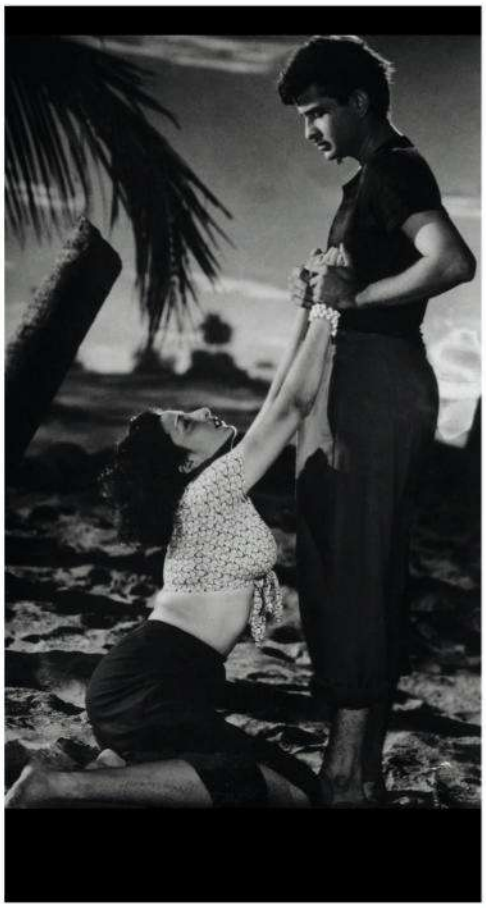


TOP LEFT A poster for 1975's *Sholay*, one of the most popular of the so-called 'Curry Westerns'

BELOW Raj Kapoor and Nargis became one of Bollywood's most popular cinematic couples

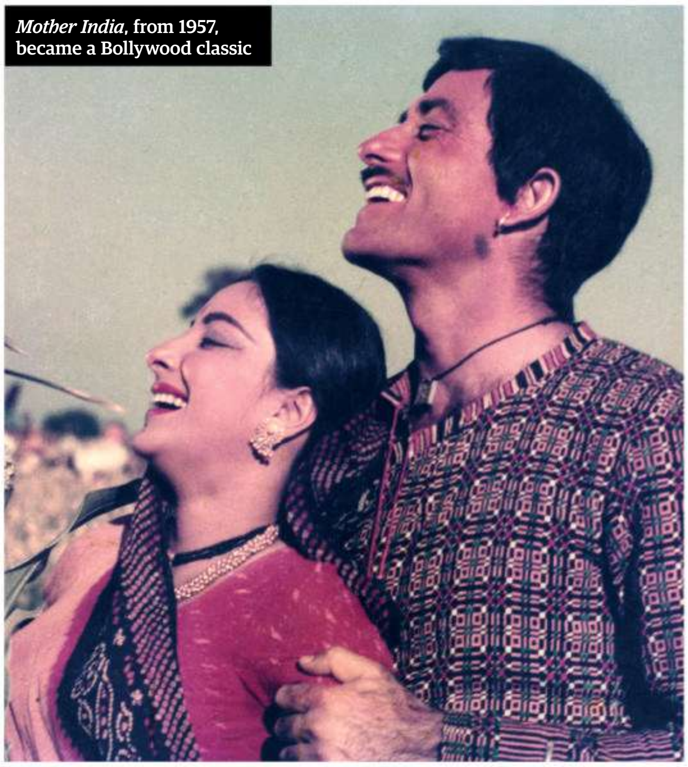
ABOVE A song and dance routine from the 1978 action film *Don*



Saal Baad from 1962 was a gothic thriller based on the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* that became the highest-grossing film of that year. It was so successful that the director, Biren Nag, would follow it with *Kohraa*, a Bollywood take on *Rebecca* using mostly the same cast and crew. Another huge Bollywood blockbuster was 1960's *Mughal-e-Azam*, a historical drama that has been described by filmmaker Anil Zankar as "one of the great Indian film epics, a phenomenon". *Waqt* (1965) was a romantic drama film that starred some of Indian cinema's biggest names, including Balraj Sahni, Raaj Kumar and Sharmila Tagore, among numerous others. The film told the story of two siblings who were separated at birth and then found themselves throughout the course of the film, a trope that would become a hallmark of many Bollywood productions. The film was the first example of the distinctive style of its director, Yash Chopra, which was defined by picturesque locations and a large dose of glitz and glamour.

Perhaps one of the most surprising genres that originated during this period is the unfortunately named 'Curry Western'. First appearing in the late 1960s, these films were a response to the Italian low-budget (and equally ill-named) 'Spaghetti Westerns'. These films, such as Sergio Leone's 'Dollars' trilogy starring Clint Eastwood (comprising 1964's *A Fistful of Dollars*, 1965's *For a Few Dollars More* and 1966's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*), and 1966's *Django*, became incredibly popular upon release in India. Seeking to capitalise on the success of these imported productions with homegrown affairs, Indian producers scrambled to create their own unique twist on the most typical of American film genres. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these early 'Curry Westerns' is 1975's *Sholay*, which has become one of the all-time greats of Bollywood cinema. In the film, a pair of prisoners are hired by a local landlord to rid him of a group of dacoits (a term for a group of armed bandits). The breakout character of the film was Gabbar Singh, the villain of the piece, portrayed memorably by Amjad Khan and made to resemble Gian Maria Volontè, who played the villain in the aforementioned Leone films. So popular were Singh's unique mannerisms and delivery that he became a Bollywood icon – even having a 2012 film named after him. Such was the success of Sholay that author William van der Heide, when discussing the 'Curry Western', stated that since its release "mercenaries and vigilantes have remained the dominant protagonists of Indian popular cinema".

It was also during the 1970s that a new and still-popular Bollywood genre was created, that of the Masala film. Describing the origins of the style, author Martha P. Nochimson writes: "Masala is a pre-mixed blend of spices that Indians use to flavour foods. Critics faced with the amazing patchwork of action, comedy, and tragedy in the action films of the 1970s compared them to that well-known Indian combination of spices." Although it has been suggested that the form existed in Tamil cinema since the early 1950s, most critics attribute it to producer, director and writer Nasir Hussain. His 1973 work, *Yaadon Ki Baaraat*, is still considered to be the definitive Masala film. Utilising the popular long-lost brothers trope made fashionable by *Waqt*, *Yaadon Ki Baaraat* follows three brothers who seek both each other and the man who killed their parents. Another director, Manmohan Desai, would take the template established in *Yaadon Ki Baaraat* and make a number of successful blockbusters such as *Amar, Akbar and Anthony* (1977), *Parvarish* (1977), *Naseeb* (1981) and *Coolie* (1983). *Amar, Akbar and Anthony*



Mother India, from 1957, became a Bollywood classic

in particular was one of the highest-grossing films of the decade and starred many of Bollywood's biggest names. When asked about his approach to making films, Desai spoke openly of his desire to give audiences escapism. "I want people to forget their misery," he said. "I want to take them into a dream world where there is no poverty, where there are no beggars, where fate is kind and god is busy looking after his flock."

It now seems appropriate to mention one of the other defining traits of Bollywood cinema. To those perhaps more familiar with Western movies, where the average film rarely goes over the 120-minute mark, the runtimes of some Bollywood productions might seem a little on the long side. For example, crime drama *Deewar* from 1975 has a runtime of two hours and 58 minutes; *Amar, Akbar and Anthony* clocks in at three hours and five minutes; and 1965's classic *Waqt* is three hours and 26 minutes. For many years an intermission halfway through the film has remained a common trait, allowing audience members to take a break and stretch their legs. While the length of these films might seem eye-watering for those of us with slightly shorter attention spans, there are numerous reasons for Bollywood's longer runtimes. Mostly it's because a large amount of the movie is taken up by the song and dance numbers. For example, a two-hour, 30-minute Bollywood production might have 45 minutes of song numbers, resulting in an overall runtime of one hour and 45 minutes - no longer than the average Western production.

Following what is considered a relative high point in the 1970s, the Bollywood productions of the 1980s and 1990s were more divisive, with a 2020 *Indian Express* article stating that "most critics generally brush off the 1980s as a 'Low Point' in Hindi cinema." Yet these decades still have their interesting productions, including a big-budget 1980 Soviet co-production based on Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves that proved to be a success in both countries. Meanwhile, *Mahakaal* from 1994 has become an established cult horror film, even receiving a DVD release in the United States due to its similarities to Wes Craven's 1986 film *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Other film genres, such as the aforementioned Masala movies, continued to grow in popularity and became staples of the Bollywood industry, creating some of its most iconic moments.

Today the Bollywood industry continues to entertain, with a massive number of films produced across a variety of genres. For any individual looking to dive into the magical world of Bollywood cinema, there are a huge number of movies to choose from.

So what are you waiting for? Plan your snack breaks around the intermissions, get your dance moves ready for all the catchy songs, and settle in for a wild ride.

> The Bollywood film industry grossed $1.3 billion in 2023.

FROM BOLLYWOOD TO TOLLYWOOD

Some of the many brands of Indian cinema explained

BOLLYWOOD (HINDI)

Taking its name from the city in which its movies are produced, Bombay (now Mumbai), Bollywood produces films in the Hindi language and is the largest segment of the Indian film industry. It accounts for nearly half of film production today.

POLLYWOOD (PUNJABI)

The name used for films produced in Punjabi, Pollywood stretches across India and Pakistan and can trace its roots back as far as 1935. It's grown into an even bigger portion of the industry in recent years, with increasing budgets and star power.

CHHOLLYWOOD (CHHATTISGARHI)

Based out of the Chhattisgarh region in central India, the film industry began here around 1965 but didn't take off for some time. The local industry has grown in strength since the Chhattisgarh state was created in November 2000.

TOLLYWOOD (BENGALI OR TELUGU)

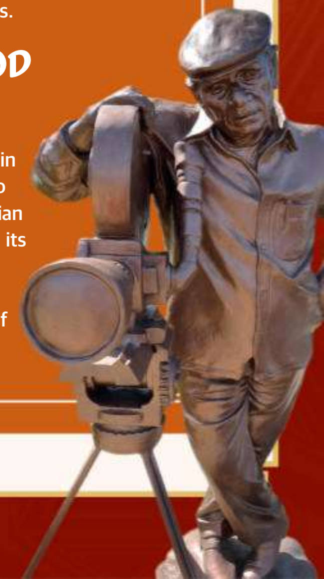
The term Tollywood can refer to films in Bengali or Telugu. The Telugu industry can trace its roots back to the silent-film era, while Bengali cinema got started not long after and enjoyed its golden era in the 1950s and '60s.

JOLLYWOOD (ASSAMESE)

Credited with producing one of the most groundbreaking films of Indian cinema, Assamese-language films can claim the 1935 movie *Joymoti* as among its biggest releases. Like much of the industry, it enjoyed a second wind in the 1950s.

SANDALWOOD (KANNADA)

With its first silent film released in 1931, movies in the Kannada language go back a long way into Indian cinema history, although its first colour film was not released until 1964. Still, it's credited with some of India's most-celebrated cinematic works.



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INDIA'S IRON LADY

Power was her destiny… and her downfall

Written by Arisa Loomba

Born in 1917 in an India still under British rule, Indira Gandhi was the only child of India's founding father, Jawaharlal Nehru – a central player in India's independence movement and the nation's first prime minister after it won its freedom from the British Empire, serving continuously from 1947 to 1964. Gandhi's rise to the top was written in the stars, and seems almost coincidental and circumstantial. Many believe she was destined to rule India, that her rise to power was inevitable.

Gandhi studied at Somerville College at the University of Oxford and joined the Congress Party in 1938, ascending to its working committee in 1959. From here she continued to climb higher and higher up the ranks of the party. Then, in 1964, everything changed. Following her father's death, the new prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, appointed her as the minister of information and broadcasting. Shastri suddenly died, though, and to the surprise of some, in a compromise between divided factions of the party, it was Gandhi who was named the new leader of the Congress Party, and thus, the new prime minister of India. How much of her takeover was intentionally planned and meticulously strategised, and how much of it was merely accidental in the face of unexpected circumstances, we may never fully know.

Following on from her father's somewhat left-wing precedent for the path of an independent India, Gandhi pursued moderate taxation, land reforms and nationalisation of major industries, including banking. The Green Revolution, beginning in the mid-1960s was her effort to address the country's deeply entrenched issue of poverty and malnutrition. It prioritised and promoted agriculture through the introduction of new mechanisation and technology such as bio-engineered seeds, chemical fertilisers and heavy irrigation, which all hoped to increase crop yields. Though undeniably effective in many regions in increasing food supply, it also unintentionally spread harmful chemicals across the countryside and pushed the poorest farmers who could not afford the new equipment even further down in the social hierarchy, exacerbating class divides.

An interesting example of Gandhi's priorities is Operation Flood: a pioneering dairy development programme that eventually put India on the map as the world's largest milk producer. This had both economic and health benefits for the nation, drastically increasing the regular access the average person had to milk, which nourished and strengthened them, while also offering employment opportunities to rural farmers. There was one drawback though, as suddenly Indians were becoming lactose intolerant after consuming far more milk than they were used to.

Gandhi's wider anti-poverty campaign was sloganed 'Garibi Hatao' (Remove Poverty). She launched the Twenty Point Programme in 1975, which aspired to reduce prices of essential goods, bring down government spending, enhance labour conditions and improve living and working conditions for the poorest in society through a series of measures such as liquidating debt, raising tax exemptions and redistributing surplus land to the landless. However, this form of state socialism became increasingly unpopular during the global recession of the late 1970s, leading many to call for economic growth through liberalism and privatisation, feeling that India was stagnating. This set a precedent for the central Indian government to become increasingly focused on neoliberal economic growth and foreign investment throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as it still is today, overseen initially by Gandhi. Some believe that Gandhi was really a socialist in name

Though many get confused, Indira Gandhi did not get her name from any relation to Mahatma Gandhi, but from her marriage to fellow Congress Party member Feroze Gandhi in 1942. With him she had two sons, Sanjay and Rajiv

© Getty Images

As a young girl with her father. Indira Gandhi's ancestry boasts a powerful lineage of Indian politicians, thinkers and independence activists

only, employing the label as a form of rhetoric to win support from the poorer masses. Indeed, many think that she was more about image and reputation than commitment to politics, and that she maintained power by placing her personality, rather than politics, at the forefront.

Though attempting to be a saviour of the people, she was incredibly controversial, and vehemently hated by many. She led a heavily criticised military conflict to protect the Himalayas from the approaching Chinese military, and steered India in the direction of the communist world by signing a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in return for military, financial and diplomatic support. When East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) wished to gain independence from West Pakistan (now Pakistan), where a central government controlled both vastly different (geographically and culturally) stretches of land, Gandhi's government wholeheartedly and rapidly supported East Pakistan's breakaway attempts. The Indian armed forces, with Soviet help, swept in and were quick to defeat West Pakistan, catalysing the creation of two separate countries on either side of North India - Pakistan and Bangladesh. Thousands of Bengalis were made homeless and sought refuge in India.

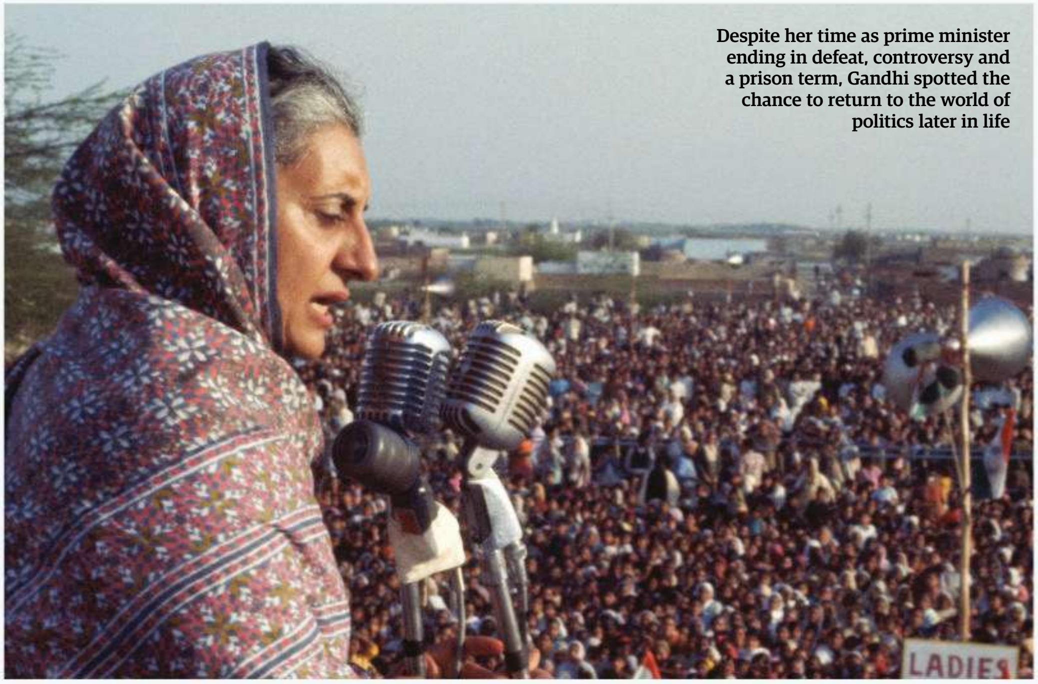
Major secessionist movements caused unrest in both corners of North India, not just without, but also within the country's borders. Both the northwestern state of Punjab and the northeastern state of Assam were gathering support to exit the state of India and become independent countries, given their vast differences with the rest of India and sense of marginalisation. Gandhi's huge impact on the northeastern region and its future cannot be understated. In the wake of significant ethnic violence in Assam and Nagaland, she broke up and reduced the size of the large state of Assam and reorganised the region by creating the new states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura. Simultaneously, Bengali refugees pouring across the Bangladeshi border into Assam and Tripura changed the demographics of the region forever.

But unrest across the region would not stop. The legacies of Gandhi's interventions in the northeast persist today: the use of military force, still-unresolved border disputes and the sense the region was seen purely as a strategic and resource-rich frontier for the government planted bitterness and tensions within the region and in its attitude towards the rest of India. Many believe her policies failed to address the true deep-rooted causes of ethnic tensions and economic neglect, instead only looking at surface-level symptoms. They were seen as having imposed a pan-Indian approach on the region that did not understand the complexities of their diverse groups and histories and were not appropriate for the situation.

Her greatest blunder, however, was dubbed the 'Emergency' - a period of 19 months during which she ruled as a dictator and turned India into an authoritarian state. It was triggered by a landslide victory for the Congress Party in the 1972 elections, a cause for celebration until it was quickly tainted by the Socialist Party stepping forward to claim that Gandhi had violated the laws of a democratic election. Amid all of this, Gandhi was also coming under fire for widespread social revolts against high prices and corruption and the impacts of a world recession upon the economy. Communism was growing as a political force in response to all of this, as was factionalism within Congress, weakening her position further. Many were unhappy with her militaristic approach to China and her willingness to freely arrest lower-caste political opponents.

In 1975, the High Court of Allahabad ruled that the prime minister had indeed committed malpractice. Such a ruling would have deprived Gandhi of her parliamentary seat and required her to steer clear of politics for six years. She appealed to the Supreme Court, to no avail. In response, in June 1975, not long after Congress had been defeated in elections in the state of Gujarat, Gandhi took the decision to trigger - without valid reason and in violation of her responsibility towards the citizens of the nation - a constitutional provision that, in extreme circumstances, could suspend democratic procedures.

Life during Gandhi's Emergency was tough and restricted. During this time she suspended all civil liberties and constitutional rights. She threw several hundred political opponents straight into prison and quickly curtailed the freedom of the press. Many controversial measures included clearing out slum dwellings in Delhi and forcibly sterilising working-class men on a mass scale as a form of 'birth control'. This continued uninterrupted until March of 1977. At this point Gandhi had become so


Despite her time as prime minister ending in defeat, controversy and a prison term, Gandhi spotted the chance to return to the world of politics later in life

controversial that she was left with no choice but to call an election, in which she was, unsurprisingly, defeated. She also found herself imprisoned for a little over a year on charges of political corruption.

Congress was crushed by the Janata Party, a merger party combining a number of parties across the political spectrum normally opposed to one another but here united by the need to end the Emergency as quickly as possible. Gandhi's fall from power signalled the end of the Emergency and was seen as a victory for democracy.

Shockingly, all of these events did not spell the end for Gandhi's political career, nor even her time in power. Splitting off to form a new version of the party, Gandhi won a new seat in the Lok Sabha (Lower House) as quickly as November 1978. The now-ruling Janata Party - formed in haste and in reality not fit to rule the country - began to fall apart, not helped by the mass upheavals and insurrections spreading among the lower and middle classes, farmers and the working class, trade unions and students, all fighting for their rights in the wake of the Emergency. Gandhi did not miss a beat, and she was back in power as the leader of the Congress and the prime minister of India by January 1980, winning the Lok Sabha elections and ushering in a further two terms in power.

There was never a dull moment in Gandhi's life or political career. She seemed to make enemies everywhere she turned through her willingness to resort to military interference and violence, particularly in domestic matters. But eventually her penchant for authoritarianism spelled the beginning of her own demise in her dealings with the predominantly Sikh Punjabi secessionist movement. The movement utilised terrorist tactics to gain attention from the central government, but at its heart it was a small movement that really wanted greater state autonomy rather than independence. However, Gandhi's government drastically escalated the situation by sending the Indian Army in to attack Sikhs who had been occupying their most sacred and holy site, the Golden Temple, for the past two years.

Known as Operation Blue Start, the assault is estimated to have cost 450 lives, though many believe far more Sikhs were murdered, and the Golden Temple was permanently marked by the gunfire. Just five months later, on 31 October 1984, Gandhi was assassinated in her garden by two of her Sikh bodyguards as revenge for the attack on the Golden Temple. She had previously been warned to replace these guards for her own safety but scoffed at the idea, a decision that cost Gandhi her life. Her murder sparked a horrific and completely disproportionate backlash against the Sikh population at large, with thousands of Sikhs brutally attacked and killed nationwide, particularly in Delhi, where violence was orchestrated by the Congress leaders themselves.

Gandhi's death marked a destabilising moment in which Indian politics shifted forever, trending towards coalition governments and increasingly violent caste and separatist politics. At both ends of the political spectrum, communism and right-wing religious extremism in the name of Hindu nationalism gathered unprecedented support. She brought a brutal, gory and violent end to the peace-seeking, left-wing, secular consensus upheld by Nehru that kept alive the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and the promises of an independent India. Most crucially, following the Emergency, there was an explosion in attempts to preserve and uphold India's democratic nature through the judiciary and the media in particular, both of whom became self-appointed watchdogs against authoritarianism, poised and ready to call it out. The Emergency highlighted to Indians just how essential a role democracy played in the country and how far its citizens would go to protect their freedoms.

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE SON

When Indira Gandhi returned to power after the Emergency, she decided it was time to prep and prime her successor, for naturally, she wanted to keep that power within the family. At first it was her son Sanjay she groomed for leadership, appointing him as her chief political advisor. But following his shocking death in a plane crash in 1980, she turned her attention to Rajiv. After her death in 1984, Rajiv ascended to power without a hitch, not unlike Gandhi had years earlier after her father's death. In more echoes of his mother's life, Rajiv was also mired in controversy and was forced to resign in 1989.

In 1991, in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, he was assassinated too. This time the murderer was a Sri Lankan Tamil suicide bomber who was protesting the involvement of an Indian 'peacekeeping force' (the army) that had been stationed in Sri Lanka to assist its government in handling another separatist terrorist group, the Tamil Tigers. The Tamils, a Dravidian ethno-linguistic group that spans southern India and Sri Lanka, had been treated poorly by the largely Sinhalese nation of Sri Lanka, and indeed, the non-Dravidian northern Indian populace, for long enough, and the Tamil Tigers were demanding change through violent terrorist means.

It was at this point that the generations-long Nehru dynasty was finally brought down, having presided over Indian politics and the development of the young nation since its first moment of freedom from the British. Yet it seems that their downfall actually came from the legacy left by the British Empire, which created a vast and sprawling hodgepodge nation called India, one that would never have otherwise been unified.

India is a nation whose internal and external borders were drawn clumsily in 1947 by Brits with no regard for locals' perceptions on the best places to put them. As a result, it was far too culturally, ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse to remain peaceful for long, and this would perhaps be the greatest and deadliest challenge for the Nehru dynasty and their Congress governments as they sought to direct post-Independence India towards a peaceful, democratic and prosperous future.

Rajiv Gandhi lighting his mother's funeral pyre. Whether by destiny or coincidence, he would soon face the same fate

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10
ICONIC INDIANS

Discover some of the most influential Indian figures in culture, science, music and more

Written by Peter Fenech

Mahatma Gandhi left an indelible mark on the world's perception of India as a progressive nation. His is a name that appears in many textbooks, legal documents, philosophical essays and historical case studies, making him one of the most recognised and influential figures of modern times. However, there are many other characters who called India their home that had just as much significance and impact on our world but whose names often go unspoken. Throughout the past couple of centuries alone, the following Indians worked to shape the future of their country, solidifying its economy, social welfare, equality and cultural reach beyond its borders. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but the people selected here represent the very best minds and inspirational personalities across the full spectrum of human endeavours. While some received official accolades, they all shaped India as a modern powerhouse nation on the world's stage.

B.R. AMBEDKAR

The Hindu caste system has long been contentious for the perceived limitations it has historically imposed upon members of the lower castes. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was a member and eventual leader of the Dalits, otherwise known as the Scheduled Castes, or the 'Untouchables' - a term generally considered derogatory. As a Dalit child growing up in Western India in the early 20th century, Ambedkar was treated poorly by children of higher-caste families and developed a passionate motivation to reduce inter-class discrimination and improve the opportunities for Scheduled Caste families. Having been awarded a scholarship to study abroad, Ambedkar rose to become a respected political leader in India. He was instrumental in the signing of the Poona Pact of 1932, which helped bestow new rights on Dalit people, and was an advocate for granting the group independent representation in Indian government. This placed him in direct conflict with Mahatma Gandhi, who believed there should be no unique voice for Dalits and that a single, united electorate would make India stronger post-independence from Britain. Ultimately, while he conceded this position, as law minister for India, Ambedkar and the Poona Pact vastly strengthened the voice of the Dalit people and cemented in the Indian constitution the illegality of discrimination against the lower castes.

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MOTHER TERESA

Few names are as widely recognised as Mother Teresa. Born to Albanian parents in Skopje, North Macedonia, as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, she felt a religious calling at an early age. She travelled to India at the age of 18 to teach at a school in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) run by the Sisters of Loreto. From that time she dedicated her life to caring for the sick and poor on the streets of the city, founding the Order of the Missionaries of Charity. Rather than directing her organisation from afar, she moved into the slum areas in which the majority of the charity's dependents lived, often suffering uncomfortable conditions and few amenities. She adopted Indian citizenship in 1948, and over the next decade she created multiple organisations and institutions for the less fortunate, including Shanti Nagar, a leper colony, and Nirmal Hriday, a hospice for patients with terminal diseases. Later in life, Mother Teresa confessed to a long-standing crisis of faith but never allowed this to affect her work. She was openly criticised for her objection to the use of contraception and her negative stance on abortion but was officially canonised in September 2016 by Pope Francis I. Despite her controversial views her lifelong selflessness is revered around the globe.

SACHIN TENDULKAR

India and cricket go hand in hand, the sport being the most popular in almost every province of the country. Sachin Tendulkar is therefore a household name across the nation. Born in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) in 1973, Tendulkar quickly showed great aptitude for cricket. He performed well in school matches and, at the age of 16, became the youngest international Test cricketer for India. Within seven years he was appointed captain of the Indian team, helping them reach the semi-finals of the 1996 World Cup and being recognised as the top scorer of that tournament. This became a trend, with Tendulkar repeatedly emerging as the top run-scorer at international tournaments. In 2005 he broke records by scoring his 35th century, and in 2007 he scored a historic double century against South Africa. His crowning glory came in 2011 when he helped guide India to a World Cup triumph on home soil, and he followed this up in 2012 by becoming the first ever player to score 100 centuries. This same year he moved into politics, being nominated to a post in the Rajya Sabha (Indian Parliament), becoming the first athlete still playing to take the position. Renowned as one of the finest batsmen in history, Tendulkar was recognised officially in 2019 when he was inducted into the International Cricket Council Hall of Fame.

RAVI SHANKAR

Fusion music is now commonplace and can be heard in almost all reaches of the popular music scene. One of the most influential catalysts for the appreciation of non-Western instruments and styles in Europe and the U.S. was Ravi Shankar. A student of music from a young age, Shankar decided to dedicate himself to the sitar when he was 18, embarking on a series of highly successful Western tours through the 1940s and 1950s. While his work in the Indian film industry brought success, it was his collaborations with American violinist Yehudi Menuhin and George Harrison of the Beatles that secured him worldwide recognition. It also ignited the trend of blending diverse musical styles, while his regular concerts for the sitar and traditional Western orchestra created a global appreciation for the staple instrument of Indian music. Throughout his career he won multiple Grammy Awards (he was the first Indian to win a Grammy), namely for his work on the *West Meets East* album in 1966, and *The Concert for Bangladesh* in 1971, featuring recordings Shankar made with Harrison and Bob Dylan. The key to his lasting influence was his ability to maintain an active body of work within India while also bridging the gap between Eastern and Western styles, sharing the popularity of the previously disparate audiences.

MILKHA SINGH

Sporting heroes hold a special place in the hearts of their fans, and none more so than Milkha Singh. Born to Sikh parents in Lyallpur in Pakistan, Singh relocated to India in 1947 after the partition of India and enlisted in the Indian Armed Forces. It was here that he discovered his athletic abilities. He finished in sixth place in a national trial also run by 400 other soldiers, leading him to be specially selected for further training. While he didn't perform at his peak during his first Olympic Games – in Melbourne in 1956 – he dedicated himself thereafter to becoming a "running machine". He went on to achieve fourth place in the 400-metre sprint at the 1960 Rome Olympic Games, becoming the first Indian male athlete to enter an Olympic athletics final, losing out on the bronze medal in a photo finish. His stellar performance earned him the affectionate nickname, the 'Flying Sikh'. He also won gold in the 200- and 400-metre races at the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, the latter marking the first ever gold medal won by an Indian in the tournament. After contracting COVID-19, Singh's health deteriorated, and he sadly passed away in 2021, but he will always be remembered as one of India's finest athletes.

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ARUNDHATI ROY

Writers have tremendous power to convey radical ideas and to promote controversial causes. Through her fiction and non-fiction work, Arundhati Roy has often touched on sensitive issues in India and around the world, bringing acclaim and criticism in equal measure. In addition to being an actress, scriptwriter and extremely popular novelist, Roy is most recognised for her outspoken nature on matters of conservation and human rights. This has often placed her in conflict with the Indian authorities. Her activism includes support for various minority causes including groups categorised as insurgents, namely the Naxalites - those belonging to the Indian communist movement. While her 1997 novel, *The God of Small Things*, was a Booker Prize-winning international bestseller and the best-performing work by a resident Indian author at the time, only two years earlier Roy had been forced to retreat from the public eye because of articles she wrote in support of Phoolan Devi, who was at the top of India's most-wanted list of criminals. Her protests against the construction of dams on the Narmada River landed her a heavy fine and prison time, and she has even been sanctioned under India's Anti-terrorism Act. While unpopular among some groups, Roy's work has earned her the Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize and Sydney Peace Prize.

SAROJINI NAIDU

During her time studying at King's College London between 1895 and 1898, which she first attended when she was only 16 years old, Naidu was exposed to the suffrage movement, igniting her passion for promoting women's rights. She became a lifelong campaigner, achieving recognition when she petitioned the British Government for increased voting rights for Indian women. Before long, Naidu became a notable voice for Indian independence from Britain as part of the Quit India Movement, becoming close allies with Mahatma Gandhi. She became the first Indian woman to be president of the Indian National Congress (INC) and, once back in India, she set up the Women's Indian Association, lecturing on matters of women's empowerment. She encouraged more women to be prominently represented in the country's independence movement. Her anti-British activism in India brought her multiple prison sentences, but at the close of the Second World War she rose to become governor of what is now the province of Uttar Pradesh. Although it is her political career for which she is most recognised as a historical figure, Naidu was also a successful poet, producing multiple collections and being appointed a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Naidu was a fierce activist, but her musical writing gained her a far gentler moniker - the 'Nightingale of India'.

RAJ KAPOOR

Raj Kapoor was a huge name in Indian cinema throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Known as both an actor and director, Kapoor had a theatrical heritage, starting out working for his father's companies, Bombay Talkies and Prithvi Theatres. At only 24 he starred in and directed his first production, *Aag* (Fire) in 1948, for which he was also a producer, and by 1950 he was operating his own film company, R K Films. It was under this banner that he shot to stardom as the romantic lead in the feature film *Awara*. This was followed by a series of critically acclaimed films including *Barsaat* (Rain) in 1949, *Jagte Raho* (Stay Awake) in 1956 and *Mera Naam Joker* (My Name Is Joker) in 1970. While not all of his projects were box-office successes, they often became cult hits, and many of the musical numbers that appeared on the soundtracks became chart-toppers. His films were especially profitable in the Indian, Asian and Soviet markets. The Kapoor legacy was cemented by the fact he had created an industrial dynasty, as several films starred his three sons and two brothers alongside him. His daring portrayal of sexuality challenged cultural norms and censorship in India, clearing a path for the more progressive standards seen in Indian cinema today.

BROWN
CLARK
CHAWLA
ANDERSON
RAMON
HUSBAND
MCCOOL
STS 107

KALPANA CHAWLA

Many of the historical figures featured in these pages have broken down barriers worldwide, but Kalpana Chawla took this progressiveness beyond the boundaries of Earth's atmosphere. In 1997, she became the first woman of Indian origin to fly in space, taking to orbit aboard Space Shuttle Columbia for mission STS-87. While her name may be renowned in scientific circles today, she was unnamed until she entered school, where she selected her own name – Kalpana, which translates as 'idea' or 'imagination'. She displayed a passion for aviation and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering from Punjab Engineering College. She moved to the United States to continue her education and became a specialist in fluid dynamics – the study of airflow around aircraft in particular. She was selected by NASA as an astronaut candidate and became an expert in Space Shuttle systems. Her first flight saw her perform multiple experiments on subjects ranging from weightlessness to the Sun's atmosphere. Sadly, her second space flight would also be her last: STS-107 launched 16 January 2003, also onboard Columbia, but ended when the vehicle disintegrated over Texas during re-entry. Chawla and her crewmates were killed. Despite a premature end to her life, Chawla has become a role model for aspiring female scientists and astronauts globally.

SIR C.V. RAMAN

A passion for knowledge and the furtherment of technology are common traits that bind the scientific community together, across borders and continents. India has a proud scientific pedigree, and Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata (CV) Raman is a revered name in the field of optics. Upon becoming a professor of physics at the University of Calcutta, Raman made a discovery that would transform our understanding of the mechanics of light. He observed that when light is beamed through a transparent material, a portion of the reflected light would refract at a shifted frequency to the incident light. These frequencies became known as the Raman frequencies and are produced by scattering in the so-called Raman effect. Throughout his career he was directly involved in the development of almost every major contemporary Indian research institute and founded the *Indian Journal of Physics*, which is still published monthly today. After receiving a knighthood in 1929, Raman moved to Bangalore to lead the physics department at the Indian Institute of Science. Then, in 1930 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics, achieved for his discovery of Raman scattering. Science continued to play a large role in his family legacy, with his nephew, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, winning a Nobel Prize for physics in 1983.

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